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THE MENNONITES

of

WESTMORELAND COUNTY PENNSYLVANIA

By

EDWARD YODER

(*Reprinted from The Mennonite Quarterly Review*)

SCOTTDALE MENNONITE CHURCH

SCOTTDALE, PENNSYLVANIA

[PRINTED IN U·S·A·]

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FOREWORD

On November 23, 24, 1940, a historical meeting was held at the Scottdale Mennonite Church, in which the centennial of Sunday-school work among Mennonites in America and the sesquicentennial of the coming of the Mennonites to the Jacobs Creek Valley in Fayette and Westmoreland counties, Pennsylvania, were observed. A home-coming of former members and friends of this congregation was also held in connection with this meeting.

Two features on the program were the reading of a paper on the subject, "The First Hundred Years (1790-1890) of the Mennonite Church in the Westmoreland-Fayette Region," by Edward Yoder, and the discussion on the subject, "The Past Fifty Years (1890-1940) of Work in Scottdale and Vicinity," by Aaron Loucks.

Later Edward Yoder continued his research in the local history and enlarged his paper into an extended article including the history of the Scottdale Mennonite congregation, which appeared in the July and October, 1941, issues of *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* under the title of "The Mennonites of Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania." Through the courtesy of *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* this article is now reprinted in booklet form with the addition of some pictures and sketches, the list of bishops, ministers, and deacons, and a chronology of events.

On behalf of the congregation we want to thank the author for his painstaking labors in giving us this history, and *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* for their permission to reprint it in booklet form from the original type for distribution among our members and friends. It is interesting, informational, and as complete as it was possible to make it with the records available. May it inspire us of this present generation to continue on in the path of devotion to service of God which our forefathers trod.

John L. Horst, Pastor, Scottdale Mennonite Church.

February 2, 1942.

THE MENNONITES OF WESTMORELAND COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

EDWARD YODER

Introduction

In southwestern Pennsylvania, not far from the foot of Chestnut Ridge, the most westerly of the Allegheny mountain ranges, was planted one of the earliest, if not the earliest of all, settlements of Mennonite people on the west side of these mountains. About forty miles southeast from Pittsburgh, where the waters of Jacobs Creek separate Westmoreland county from Fayette county which lies to the south of it, the earliest Mennonite pioneers who crossed over the mountains settled down among the hills and hollows of a goodly land. Jacobs Creek flows in an irregular westerly course through the midst of the region which comprised their earliest settlement. This stream empties into the Youghiogheny River ten or more miles farther west.

The early Mennonites found the soil in Jacobs Creek valley fertile and well suited for agricultural use, for they were invariably farmers looking for cheaper land. Water here was plentiful, and timber also. In some ways the aspect of the countryside in this region has been much altered since that early day, chiefly through the

operations carried on in connection with the coal mining and coke manufacturing industries for nearly fifty years, beginning about 1870. Where now one looks upon long stretches of cinder heaps, the unsightly ruins of coke ovens long since abandoned, or fields rendered useless by countless sunken pitholes over old coal mines there were at that time green fields and pleasant woods. The entire area was underlaid with abundant seams of soft coal of the best quality known for the making of coke suitable for use in the manufacture of iron and steel. The earliest pioneers, however, were quite unaware of the buried black treasure they acquired when they first purchased their tracts of land in these parts. Their settlement was right in the midst of what later became known as the famous Connellsville Coal Region.

Before the Mennonite settlers first arrived in this section of Pennsylvania one hundred fifty years ago, this part of the state had already seen twenty or thirty years of civilized history. Sixteen years before their coming sufficient people were living west of Laurel Mountain to require the erection of a local county. Pennsylvania still belonged to the Penns at that time. In 1773 that part of Bedford county which lay west of Laurel Mountain was formed into Westmoreland county, which at first included all of southwestern Pennsylvania west of that ridge.

The earliest settlers in this western region were chiefly the Scotch-Irish who had come here from the northeastern and central counties of Penn's province. They were hardy frontiersmen who were pushing the American frontier farther and farther westward, in some instances they even pushed their settlements ahead of the legal acquisition of the lands through treaties with the Indians. During and after the war of the American Revolution the wave of immigration into this part of the state increased greatly. By the year 1783, about six years before the first Mennonites reached this place, Fayette county was erected out of the southern part of Westmoreland county. At first the Youghiogheny River was established as the boundary between the two counties, but the next year Jacobs Creek was finally fixed upon as the dividing line.

The flow of westward migration in the United States was getting well under way as the eighteenth century was drawing toward its close. The desire for more and cheaper lands as well as the lure of the frontier took possession of many people of all classes. Even con-

servative, peace-loving, and home-loving Mennonites got the fever to go west and grow up with the country. These people, however, were seldom the vanguard of the population tide as it moved westward, but they usually followed closely on the heels of the first pioneers who fought the Indians and planted the seeds of civilization in the vast wilderness of the Ohio River valley and still farther west.

The year 1940 marked the passing of a century and a half in the history of the Mennonites in Jacobs Creek valley. For convenience one may roughly divide the one hundred and fifty years of this history into three parts of approximately fifty years each. There was no single event that sharply marks off the first fifty years from the second. But in general the years from 1790 to 1840 may be characterized as the period of extensive immigration and of growth in the settlement. The second half century, from 1840 to about 1892, in contrast was a period of general decline in the life of the Mennonite congregation, due to the moving away of some and to the fact that many more affiliated themselves with other church bodies. The most recent period, which should strictly be dated from 1892, covers the history of the present Scottdale Mennonite congregation.

Those who engage in the study of the history of early Mennonite settlements in America uniformly lament the fact that Mennonites of earlier generations kept very few written records in their congregations. It is difficult and frequently impossible to reconstruct a picture of the life and activities of the pioneer congregations with any degree of accuracy and completeness. The same holds true also of the Mennonite congregation in the Westmoreland-Fayette settlement. There are no official church records known to be in existence for the first one hundred years of the congregation's history. Numerous family records of Mennonite families have in the past been collected and their histories published. Among these are some of families which have extensive representation in this section. The general histories and the biographical histories of the local counties have been rather carefully prepared, so that it is possible to gather some valuable information from these about the early Mennonite settlers. It is from these general histories and records and from the official archives of the counties in which the settlement is located that the data for the early history of the local Mennonite congregation must be gathered and pieced together. The present discussion of this history is by no means complete and many details still require further

study and investigation. It is in commemoration of one hundred and fifty years of Mennonite history and life in Jacobs Creek valley that this history is here presented.

I. *The Early Period,* 1790-1840

The earliest Mennonite settlers of whom we have knowledge in the valley of Jacobs Creek acquired tracts of land in the years 1789, 1790, and 1791. There were four families of these people that bought land and settled on the south side of the creek in Fayette county, just outside Westmoreland, in the years indicated. The first was Jacob Strickler who in 1789 purchased from Jacob Stewart, his brother-in-law, a tract of 395 acres for the sum of 750 pounds lawful money. This tract was located along the south side of Jacobs Creek, about a mile southwest from where Scottdale is now. Some of this land is now included in the Creekline Farms. It is recorded that this Jacob Strickler built a sawmill and a gristmill along Jacobs Creek, on the site of the later Keister's Mill.[1]

Later in the same year John Stouffer purchased from John Stephenson several hundred acres of land along Jacobs Creek just east and south of Jacob Strickler's tract. His land included the site where the village of Owensdale is now and extended from there eastward. This John Stouffer was not related to the minister Abraham Stauffer who bought land close by the next year. He was probably a son-in-law of the John Shank who six years later bought land in the adjoining township of Bullskin. Shank came here from Hagerstown, Maryland, and John Stouffer was evidently from the same place. He later lived in Bullskin township himself. He and some of his family are buried in the Mt. Pleasant cemetery. In the United States census of 1790 John Stouffer is given as head of a family of eight persons in Tyrone township, Fayette county.

In March, 1790, we find record that Abraham Stauffer, yeoman, of Lancaster county, Pennsylvania, bought from Benjamin Wells a tract of 278 acres of land in Tyrone township, Fayette county. As this piece of land had not before been patented, Abraham Stauffer in September of the same year received a patent for it from the com-

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1. The federal census of 1790 records the following heads of families with name Strickler in Tyrone township, Fayette county, Pennsylvania: Jacob Strickler 1st, ten in family; Jacob Strickler, senr, nine in family; Henry Strickler, one; Abraham Strickler, one. *Heads of Families, First Census of the United States: 1790. State of Pennsylvania,* p. 110.

monwealth of Pennsylvania. He had paid Mr. Wells 320 pounds in money for the land.[2] His tract also lay along the south bank of Jacobs Creek, farther to the east and north than the land purchased earlier by Jacob Strickler and John Stouffer. It included the ground whereon the borough of Everson has since been built, and it extended from there to the east and south.

Abraham Stauffer was a Mennonite minister. When and where he was ordained as minister is unknown. It is probable that he had been ordained to that position before he came here from Lancaster county, where according to the family tradition his father had been a preacher before him. Besides being a preacher he also served as an elder or bishop in the congregation. Again there is no record when he was called to this office, whether before leaving his eastern home or after the Mennonite congregation was established in his new home. Abraham Stauffer was accordingly the first Mennonite preacher to buy land and settle in the Jacobs Creek region. The United States census of 1790 gives his household as consisting in that year of nine persons.

The family and descendants of Abraham Stauffer were destined to play a leading and influential part both in the history of the Mennonite congregation of this place and in the industrial and cultural life of the community in general. He had nine children who grew to maturity and married. Unlike as was the case with many of the other pioneer Mennonite families, nearly all the Stauffer children remained in the locality where their father had settled, where they became prominent in business and community affairs. Many later descendants of this pioneer Mennonite preacher have been leaders in church, business, and industrial circles in this and surrounding communities.[3]

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2. Fayette County Archives, *Deed Book* 174, page 498, and *Deed Book* D, page 366.

3. Abraham Stauffer (1752-1826), was married to Ann Nissley (1752-1817). He was a son of John Stauffer (1733-1811), who married Veronica Buckwalter. His grandfather was Christian Stauffer, an immigrant from the Palatinate in 1749. Two persons by name of Christian Stauffer landed in Philadelphia in that year, one on September 9, the other on September 15 (*Pennsylvania-German Pioneers*, by Strassburger-Hinke (1934), Vol. I, Lists 128C and 133C). Which of these was Abraham Stauffer's grandfather is uncertain. One of these immigrants of 1749 evidently came from Ibersheimerhof in the Palatinate; see "Palatinate Mennonite Census Lists," in *The Mennonite Quarterly Review*, Vol. XIV (1940), pp. 171, 184. The children of Preacher Abraham Stauffer were: Barbara, married —— Smith; Christian, mrd. Agnes Overholt; Martin, mrd. Elizabeth Overholt; Abraham, mrd. Elizabeth Myers; John, mrd. Catharine Loucks; Maria, mrd. Abraham Overholt; Fannie, mrd. John Tinstman; Anna, mrd. John Sherrick; Elizabeth, mrd. Christian Overholt.

The fourth Mennonite to purchase land here was John Shallenberger. A number of Shallenbergers are listed in the United States census of 1790 as family heads in Fayette county. They were John, David, and Abraham in Bullskin township, and Jacob in Tyrone township. The John mentioned was the father of David and Abraham. What relation Jacob was to these is not clear. John Shallenberger bought of Edward Dyal for six hundred pounds in money 426 acres of land, a tract which included the present site of Pennsville and extended from there westward for about a mile. He purchased this land in 1791. He lived only about two years after that date, for his last will and testament, written January 6, 1793, was probated on March 18 of the same year. Joseph Scherg was one of the witnesses who subscribed the will, and in it Abraham Stauffer and Jacob Strickler, designated as "my good friends," were named as the executors of the will. The large farm was later divided about equally between the two sons, David and Abraham. It is not known where this John Shallenberger was buried. Evidently his death was one of the earliest among the Mennonite settlers, and one conjecture might be that he was buried on the west end of his own farm, and that his resting place became the nucleus for the Mennonite burying ground, beside which a little later was erected the earliest meetinghouse, known as the Pennsville meetinghouse. The location is on the boundary between Bullskin and Tyrone townships, and it lay next to the principal road then running north from a ford of the Youghiogheny River, a road which, according to local tradition, George Washington once traveled.

The first United States census has also the name of Joseph Sharrick as head of a family of seven persons and resident in Tyrone township, Fayette county, in the year 1790.[4] It is not known that he purchased land at an early date. He too was a Mennonite minister,

4. Preacher Joseph Sherrick (1757-1811) married Anna Musser. Their children were: Christian, married Elizabeth Stoner; Peter, mrd. Barbara Funk; Joseph, mrd. Barbara Beitler; Mary, mrd. Abraham Stoner; Catharine; Anna, mrd. Henry Ruth; Susanna, mrd. Christian Funk; Jacob; Henry, mrd. Anna Stauffer. According to local tradition in the Sherrick family, Preacher Joseph Sherrick was son of Joseph Sherrick (1738-1807), who married Susanna Strickler. The latter Joseph came from Switzerland to America with his father, Joseph Scherg (d. 1770), whose wife died at sea. The last named Joseph took up land in Hempfield township, Lancaster county, Pennsylvania, on May 27, 1741. If this information is correct, the Joseph Sherrick who settled in Fayette county in 1790 was not born in Switzerland, as has been sometimes stated, he being confused with his father. The exact identification and the relationships of the numerous early Joseph Sherricks of Lancaster county is still partly an unsolved problem among the historians of the family.

but whether ordained to that office before or after coming to this place is unknown. He was accompanied to Fayette county from Lancaster county, Pennsylvania, by his younger brother, John Sherrick. John married Nancy Ann Stauffer, daughter of Preacher Abraham Stauffer, and later he owned land in the same vicinity. Abraham Stauffer and the two Sherrick brothers came to this place from the western part of Lancaster county, the former, it is thought, from East Donegal township, and the Sherricks from either East or West Hempfield township. The Strickler and Shallenberger families undoubtedly came from the same vicinity in Lancaster county.

Other Mennonite families migrated to the two townships of Tyrone and Bullskin south of Jacobs Creek in the years that followed these earliest land purchases. In fact a John Rist is listed as family head in Bullskin township in the United States census of 1790. In 1793 one Christian Rhist from Lancaster county bought land in Tyrone township. Conrad Rist, who was later a minister in the Mennonite congregation, was evidently related to these.[5]

In 1795 John Shank, a Mennonite who had lived near Hagerstown, Maryland, bought extensive tracts of land north of Pennsville. His lands extended east as far as Mounts Creek, where he is said to have erected the first mill on the site of the later Detwiler Mills. In his will, written in 1804, he mentions a mill as a part of his earthly estate. As stated before, the John Stouffer who came to Tyrone township in 1789 was apparently son-in-law of John Shank. The latter, according to a statement in the local county history, was buried in the Mennonite graveyard, although no tombstone today carries any inscription that identifies his last resting place.[6]

Three brothers with the name Newcomer, Christian, John, and Abraham, came with their father Peter Newcomer from Washington county, Maryland, to Tyrone township before 1800. Peter Newcomer was earlier from Lancaster county in Pennsylvania. Peter Galley, who was married to a sister of the Newcomer brothers, settled in the same township.

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5. A Rist family cemetery is located near Broadford, Pa. The ground for this family burial plot was on the farm of John Rist (1777-1855) of Connellsville township, and was reserved and designated as "a burying ground for the Reist family forever," in a codicil to his will, dated February 4, 1849 (Fayette County Archives, *Will Book* 3, p. 201). Preacher Conrad Reist (1787-1841) is buried in this family plot. Today the burial plot is entirely neglected and all the old headstones are fallen over.

6. Ellis, F., *History of Fayette County, Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1882), p. 489.

Still farther to the northeast in Bullskin township, Fayette county, one finds mention of the comparatively early settlement of some Mennonite families. The names of Peter Freed, who died about 1830, Jacob Eshelman, and several Shupes are among those who early developed farms and built mills along Green Lick Run. Still later, about 1827, Henry Detwiler from eastern Pennsylvania became the owner of the mills on Mounts Creek which were built earlier by John Shank and were subsequently known for a long time as Detwiler's Mills. They were located near the site of the present Country Club buildings and the hotel on the Connellsville-Mt. Vernon road. Henry Detwiler is buried in the Pennsville Mennonite burying ground, together with some members of his family.

In a general way it can be said that the Mennonites who lived on the south side of Jacobs Creek, that is in Fayette county, were not as numerous neither were they as closely settled in a compact community as were those on the Westmoreland side of the line, of whom we shall speak presently. They were scattered out over parts of three townships, and southward as far as Broadford and Connellsville. As a matter of fact Preacher Abraham Stauffer himself owned some land late in his life south of the Youghiogheny River in Dunbar township, and a number of his grandchildren lived in that locality. Of the early religious activities among the Mennonites south of Jacobs Creek practically nothing is specifically known. The preachers were Abraham Stauffer and Joseph Sherrick, as mentioned before. As was the custom in pioneer days, meetings for preaching and worship were held at first in the private homes of the members. The tradition exists that the first meetinghouse on the site about a mile west of Pennsville was erected a little before the year 1800. So far it has been impossible to discover any specific records regarding the purchase of the ground used for this churchyard and the cemetery that adjoined it. Judging from the plats of the early land surveys, the location of the meetinghouse was on the land which was included in the original John Shallenberger farm, and evidently on that part of it which later belonged to his son Abraham. The oldest dated marker in the burying ground is inscribed with the date 1811. There are however numerous undated rough stones, some of which certainly mark graves earlier than that date. It is possible that the land was early donated or set aside for its intended purpose without formal record of deed.

Early Period, 1790-1840

The activities of the Mennonite congregation in the earliest days were naturally simple and limited in number. All the services then and for a long time after that were conducted in the German language, and meetings were held probably every two or four weeks. Of the families named before as Mennonites who settled on the south side of Jacobs Creek it is doubtful if the younger members of some of these became active members of the Mennonite congregation. The Shallenbergers lived in the vicinity of Pennsville for some years. Some of them were skilled tanners and makers of leather goods. Among the township officials in the year 1793 and later one finds the names of David and Abraham Shallenberger at various times filling the office of constable, which seems odd, to say the least, on the part of Mennonites. One notes too that in the history of the Pennsville Baptist church, which was started soon after the year 1800 as a sort of union congregation, occur the names of a number of Shallenbergers among the active organizers and supporters. Very similar is the story of the immediate descendants of John Shank near Pennsville, as well as of the Strickler and Newcomer families. It is interesting to observe too that the majority of the early burials in the Pennsville Mennonite cemetery were of the descendants of the Stauffer and the Sherrick families. Evidently these families and their descendants formed a large part of the active Mennonite membership on the south side of Jacobs Creek.

During the last decade of the eighteenth century Mennonite settlers began to come into the southern part of Westmoreland county. They settled mostly in what is now East Huntingdon township on lands lying between the present site of Alverton and Mt. Pleasant on the north and Jacobs Creek on the south. These settlers, many of them at least, like those who had earlier come into Fayette county, brought with them considerable financial capital, and so they were able to purchase the land they desired from the earlier settlers. The Mennonites on the north side of Jacobs Creek came from a number of different counties in eastern and southern Pennsylvania. They were from Bucks, Chester, Berks, Lancaster, Northampton, Bedford, and perhaps other counties. A few families were evidently recent immigrants from Europe.

Some German settlers began acquiring land in this part of Westmoreland county as early as 1790. Michael Shupe bought 151 acres near Mt. Pleasant in 1790. While it is possible that he was a Men-

nonite, it yet appears more likely that he was an adherent of the German Baptists. Some of the Shupes around Mt. Pleasant were very early among the leading supporters of the United Brethren in Christ congregation in that locality.

The first settler in East Huntingdon township who was certainly a Mennonite was George Mumma. In 1794 he purchased 291 acres of land for the sum of 750 pounds in money. His farm was situated a little over a mile north of the present site of Scottdale. His brother David came with him to this township and later he also owned land and resided in the same neighborhood. The Mumma (Mumaw) family came originally from Lancaster county, Pennsylvania.[7]

In the year 1797 at least five Mennonites purchased land in East Huntingdon township. Henry Fox bought 300 acres in that year for 1400 pounds in money, and the next year he added another large tract to his holdings.[8] The same year Martin Overholt bought a tract of land not far from the George Mumma farm. His homestead lay just a short distance south of the present site of West Overton. He was a younger brother of the Henry Overholt who came to the same community from Bucks county three years after Martin's coming. Martin Overholt died in 1813, after he had completed his preparations to move from here to Ohio. Most of his children did move to that state or later to states farther west. Martin Overholt's daughter Elizabeth married Abraham Welty who was one of the early preachers in the Mennonite congregation at this place. Welty moved to Ohio in 1812 where he served as a Mennonite preacher and bishop in Tuscarawas county until his death. Another daughter of Martin Overholt married Christian Stauffer, son of Preacher Abraham Stauffer of Fayette county. Christian Stauffer was the Mennonite deacon in the local congregation in the early part of the nineteenth century.

From Bucks county, in eastern Pennsylvania, the same region from which the Overholt families came, evidently was Henry Rosenberger. He purchased 228 acres of land for 480 pounds in money in 1797. Adam Tinstman with his family in the same year came to

7. A note in the *Herald of Truth*, Vol. XXXV (1898), p. 297, states that the cemetery adjoining the Kraybill Mennonite meetinghouse in Lancaster county was originally the private burying ground of the Mumma family.

8. Six children are named as heirs in the will of Henry Fox (d. 1824). They are: Barbara, mrd. John Strong; John, mrd. (1) Elizabeth Rosenberger, (2) Frederica Caroline Carver; Nancy, mrd. Jacob Tinstman; Christian, mrd. Elizabeth Funk; Maria, mrd. John Funk; Magdalena, mrd. John Stoner.

Westmoreland county. He bought land that year, 204 acres for 942 pounds in money. Jacob Tinstman, perhaps a son or brother of Adam, signed as one of the witnesses to this deed of purchase, and he bought some land for himself in 1801. The Tinstman family was evidently from Bucks county too, for two sons of Adam Tinstman married daughters of Martin Fretz of Tinicum township, Bucks county, Pennsylvania.[9] One of the sons, Mathias, later moved to Columbiana county, Ohio, where he served as a Mennonite preacher from 1819 to 1832. He died in Medina county, Ohio. Also in 1797 Henry Whiteman (Wideman) purchased 149 acres of land for 149 pounds. Nothing further is known of this man, except that he was a trustee of the Mennonite congregation in 1799, the year the first ground was purchased for the use of the congregation.

In 1799 a number of Mennonites made land purchases in the settlement which was developing. Henry Yothers, coming from the eastern part of the state, bought 65 acres of land for the sum of 300 pounds in money. His purchase was situated a little farther east, in Mount Pleasant township. Presumably this was the father of the later Mennonite preacher, Henry Yother, who was ordained minister in 1845. The older Henry died about 1846.

Also in 1799 Christian Stoner came to East Huntingdon township from Bedford county. His father, Abraham Steiner, was an immigrant from Switzerland to America in 1744.[10] Christian Stoner purchased five hundred acres of land a little southwest of the present site of Alverton. He and his descendants owned much land in the vicinity where the village later grew up. The place was long known as Stonerville, being so named from the numerous Stoners who lived near there. It has been renamed Alverton only within the past fifty years. Christian Stoner was himself the first person to erect a sawmill and begin other local industries at the site of Stonerville. He also put up a cabinetmaker's shop, in which craft he was skilled. He is said to have been the first undertaker in the township. Skill in

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9. Fretz, A. J., *A Brief History of John and Christian Fretz,* (Elkhart, Ind., 1890), pp. 412, 428.

10. Abraham Steiner signed his name on December 22, 1744, as an immigrant on the ship Muscliffe Galley, (Strassburger-Hinke, *Pennsylvania-German Pioneers,* Vol. I, p. 238). He was presumably the father of Christian who came to Westmoreland county. Christian (1757-1814) was married to Barbara Shank (1765-1816). Their children were: John, mrd. Magdalena Fox; Abraham, mrd. Mary Sherrick; Barbara, mrd. John Wurtz; Elizabeth, mrd. Christian Sherrick, a Mennonite preacher; Christian, mrd. Annie Stauffer; Jacob, mrd. (1) Anna Beitler, (2) Sarah Fox; Daniel; Henry; Anna, mrd. John Rudabaugh; David.

cabinetmaking in those days carried with it the business of constructing coffins and of burying the dead. This work seems to have been long continued as a tradition in the Stoner family. A grandson of the pioneer named above, himself named Christian Stoner, a Mennonite deacon, served in the capacity of community undertaker for at least thirty-five years, from about 1855 to 1890. He died in 1892, and in his obituary it is reported that he had buried near a thousand people in his lifetime.[11] Most of the early Stoner families remained residents of the locality where their ancestor had settled, and where his descendants have played an influential part in the development of the community.

Thus during the last years of the century, as has been pointed out, the influx of Mennonites into East Huntingdon township had grown into a good-sized stream. The year 1800 saw that stream grow still larger, when more families, especially from Bucks county, Pennsylvania, came into the settlement. David Strohm bought land in 1800. The Strohm family came from Germany to this community, it is reported, after a stay of just a few years in eastern Pennsylvania. David Funk, the third Mennonite preacher to come to the settlement and the first one to settle in Westmoreland county, arrived in 1800. He located on a farm not far from where Alverton is now, being a near neighbor to Christian Stoner and George Mumaw who were located here before he came. Preacher David Funk died in 1833. Some of his children married members of the Fox and Sherrick families. Most of them later moved out of the state and cast their lot with other denominational bodies, some with the Church of God (Winebrennarian), and some with the German Baptists.[12]

The year 1800 marked also the coming to this region of the second large Oberholzer family, generally known here as Overholt. This was Henry Oberholzer, brother to the Martin Overholt before mentioned. Their father, Martin Oberholzer, was a native of Germany who migrated to America in the early part of the eighteenth century and settled in Bucks county, Pennsylvania.[13] Henry, like his brother Martin, was no longer a young man at the time of his coming to East Huntingdon township. He too had a large family of

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11. *Herald of Truth,* Vol. XXIX (1892), p. 78.

12. Fretz, A. J., *A Brief History of Bishop Henry Funck* (Elkhart, Ind., 1899), pp. 28f.

13. Fretz, A. J., *A Genealogical Record of the Descendants of Martin Oberholtzer,* (Milton, N. J., 1903), pp. 1, 2.

grown children, some of whom were already married and possessed families of their own. The Oberholzers were a prolific and hardy clan. Martin Overholt had fourteen children, most of whom married and reared families averaging only slightly smaller in size than their father's. Henry, many of whose descendants still reside in this and near-by localities, had twelve children, most of whom enjoyed generous families too. The Overholts settled in the vicinity where West Overton is now, then a place about three miles southwest from Mt. Pleasant.

Henry Oberholzer and his family founded the village of West Overton. He laid out his new homestead on the site of the present Historical House at West Overton. He had been a landowner and extensive farmer in Bucks county before coming to Westmoreland county. His homestead there was located next to the Deep Run Mennonite meetinghouse, in Bedminster township. He sold that estate, it is said, for "1500 pounds gold and silver money." Then loading his entire family of wife, five sons, seven daughters, five sons-in-law, two daughters-in-law, and thirteen grandchildren, together with a great quantity of goods and chattels upon a string of covered wagons, he set out upon the long journey of three hundred miles to the new land on the other side of the mountains. It was in the summer of 1800 that this company of some thirty souls reached East Huntingdon township. Henry, the father of the company, at once bought several hundred acres of land which he had selected and proceeded to build a new homestead to replace the one he had left behind in Bucks county. His married sons and daughters settled on lands near by and around their father's place, and they all set about to improve their farms and build homes for themselves.

The coming of the Overholt families brought into the Mennonite settlement in Jacobs Creek valley a number of family names that have since figured prominently in the local history and in the history of the Mennonite congregation. Agnes, a daughter of Henry Oberholzer, was married to Christian Fretz, and they were the progenitors of the people of that name in this area. Anna, another daughter of the same pioneer, was the wife of Peter Loucks, and she was the ancestress of the Loucks descendants in this region. Another daughter, Barbara, was married to Jacob Durstine. Three of the younger children of Henry Oberholzer married members of Preacher Abraham Stauffer's family after coming here.

The Peter Loucks mentioned above lived for the first year after his arrival in the settlement on the south side of Jacobs Creek, but the next year, in 1801, he bought land on the north side of this stream. Through this purchase and later ones by which he added to his acres, Peter Loucks in the course of time became owner of most of the land now covered by the borough of Scottdale, as well as of much besides. This pioneer Loucks was father of the later minister in the Mennonite congregation, named Martin Loucks. Martin's sons, Peter S. Loucks and Jacob S. Loucks, owned their grandfather's original farm, purchased in 1801, at the time the town of Scottdale was first laid out in 1872.[14] The pioneer Loucks was great-grandfather of the older generation of the Loucks name who are today members of the Scottdale Mennonite congregation.

One son of Henry Oberholzer was named Jacob. He is said to have been a skilled veterinarian and lived on a farm between West Overton and where Scottdale is now. Jacob Overholt was the father of the later preacher and elder John D. Overholt (1797-1878), who served the Mennonite congregation here as one of its ministers for nearly fifty years, from 1830 to 1878. The next to the youngest of the sons of Henry Oberholzer was Abraham Overholt. In the course of time he became the owner of the homestead of his father at West Overton. Abraham Overholt was an enterprising farmer and business man. He is credited with being the first discoverer and user of coal in this part of Westmoreland county. As early as 1810 he established on his farm a small still for the making of distilled liquor. Twenty years later a flouring mill was added to his industries, and the use of steam power was first introduced by him at the same time. The superior quality of Abraham Overholt's products, so it is said, made his business prosper and grow steadily. Later some of his sons, nephews, and grandsons carried on this man's business on still greater scale.[15] At Broadford in Fayette county, and at other points in Western Pennsylvania the Overholt distilleries still continue to operate.

This Abraham Overholt was during his whole lifetime a leading member of the Mennonite congregation, and he served at different

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14. Albert, G. D., *History of the County of Westmoreland, Pennsylvania,* (1882), p. 682; Boucher, John N., *Old and New in Westmoreland,* (1918) Vol. II, p. 558; *History of Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania,* (1906) Vol. I, p. 576.

15. Albert, *op. cit.,* pp. 688-690.

times as one of the trustees of the congregation.[16] None of his children, however, seem to have united with their parents' congregation.[17] The fact that a leading member of the Mennonite congregation was the founder of an extensive distilling business, and that his portrait still adorns the trade labels and advertisements of the product of this industry may be thought to reflect poor credit on the Mennonites, who are today among the foremost advocates of the teaching and practice of temperance and of total abstinence from strong drink. Yet it is only fair to say that even as recently as one hundred years ago the present-day emphasis on temperance teaching and the present well-known Christian attitude toward the use of alcoholic liquor were practically unknown. Among the Mennonite ancestors who migrated from Europe the business of making distilled liquor was considered quite as legitimate and necessary a community enterprise as that of milling flour, strange as that idea may seem to us today. In the absence of the medical knowledge of today, distilled liquors had to serve too as medicine for many ailments from which the people suffered. And lastly it was easier to transport to the far-off markets the produce of the farms in the form of distillates than in the much bulkier form of grain.

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16. An obituary of Abraham Overholt was published in the *Herald of Truth,* Vol. VII, p. 47. It is there stated that he was buried in the Mennonite burying ground in East Huntingdon township. His remains were evidently removed later and laid to rest in the Mt. Pleasant cemetery where simple markers indicate the resting place of him and his wife. A later biographer of his grandson, Henry Clay Frick, refers to Abraham Overholt as the "squire of Westmoreland county" (quoted in *Dictionary of American Biography,* Vol. VII, p. 29).

17. A number of Abraham Overholt's descendants became outstanding leaders in the business and industrial life of western Pennsylvania. The coal mining industry, with the associated business of manufacturing coke and smelting iron ore, began to be developed in Fayette and Westmoreland counties in an extensive way about 1870. Two prominent men whose names are associated with the history of these industries were Abraham O. Tinstman and Henry Clay Frick, both of them grandsons of Abraham and Maria (Stauffer) Overholt. Abraham O. Tinstman (b. 1834), son of Anna Overholt and John Tinstman, organized and built the Broadford-Mt. Pleasant railroad in 1870, mainly to provide transportation facilities for the local coal and coke industries which were just then opening up. The railroad was later sold to the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Company, which still operates it. Mr. Tinstman dealt extensively in coal lands, from which he made a fortune.

Henry Clay Frick (1849-1919) was the son of Elizabeth Overholt and John W. Frick. He with his cousin Abraham O. Tinstman and others organized the H. C. Frick Coal Company in 1871. Mr. Frick carried on extensive business operations in western Pennsylvania, being closely associated with Andrew Carnegie. He was a shrewd business man, and the company of which he was the head became the largest coke producing company in the world. In 1889 he controlled 35,000 acres of coal lands and operated 15,000 coke ovens, representing two-thirds of the capacity of the entire Connellsville region. His fortune at his death was estimated at one hundred millions.

A few more of the early settlers whose families contributed to the growth of the Mennonite congregation may be briefly mentioned. In the year 1801 Abraham Ruth purchased 145 acres of land for 218 pounds money. His farm lay next to Christian Stoner's land on the west. Another Mennonite family that early settled in East Huntingdon township was that of John Wurtz. He bought land in 1802, acquiring 309 acres for the sum of 1200 pounds in money. Other family names which in the early years appeared among the members of the Mennonite congregation in this township were Bare, Bachtel, Bossler, Dillinger, Landis, Lane, Myers.

It is in part possible to imagine what the daily life of the early Mennonite settlers may have been like as they labored in the new country to acquire lands and build homes. Life was simple on the frontier here, as it always was under similar circumstances. As to the religious life of the people, we are also left largely to the fertility of our imagination for picturing to ourselves the religious activities which were carried on in the settlement. We know that by the time Mennonite settlers in any numbers began purchasing land north of Jacobs Creek the meetinghouse near Pennsville in Fayette county may already have been built, although the exact date of its erection is not known.

By the time the Mennonite preacher, David Funk, bought his land in East Huntingdon township in 1800, some steps had already been taken toward providing a location for a house of worship in this township. The need for a burying ground perhaps necessitated the earliest steps toward the acquisition of a plot of ground as the property of the congregation. On March 21, 1799, there is record of the first ground purchased by the trustees of the Mennonite congregation. The site was chosen near the foot of a high hill on the north side of the road that ran west from Mt. Pleasant to Smith's Ferry, now Smithton. The village of Stonerville later grew up at this place, which is about three miles from Mt. Pleasant. The trustees of the congregation, Henry Wideman and Adam Tinnsman, bought about an acre and a half of ground from Mathias Kamp and Elizabeth his wife for five pounds in money "for the use of a Mennonist Meetinghouse, Buriel Ground and School House forever."[18]

Exactly how soon after the purchase of this ground the meetinghouse was erected upon it is not certainly known. It was presumably

18. Westmoreland County Archives, *Deed Book* 7, page 197.

not long after the time of the purchase, likely the next year, in 1800. One notes that according to the deed of purchase a schoolhouse was contemplated as part of the congregation's equipment, and it seems safe to assume that a school was conducted on these premises during the early years, likely until the time when the public school system was established in East Huntingdon township about thirty-five years later. The practice of having a schoolhouse beside the meetinghouse was customary in the Mennonite settlements in eastern Pennsylvania in those days.[19] The Funks and Oberholzers, coming as they did from the eastern part of the state, where the tradition of the life and work of a Mennonite teacher like Christopher Dock was well known, doubtless were interested in perpetuating the same educational tradition in the new settlement west of the mountains. Who the teachers were that taught in the schoolhouse at this place remains unknown.

During the early years of the nineteenth century some of the Mennonite ministers in Lancaster county, Pennsylvania, kept in touch with the congregations in the newer settlements of Mennonites in the central and western counties of the state. The distance from their county to Westmoreland and Fayette counties was over two hundred miles. And while exact names and dates are not on record of visits made in the Jacobs Creek region by Mennonite preachers from Lancaster county, nevertheless it is certainly true that there were those among them who made the sacrifices and endured the hardships of leaving home and travelling on horseback over dangerous, difficult mountain roads these hundreds of miles to minister to the spiritual needs of the scattered congregations and members. In a general way the Mennonite congregations in western Pennsylvania, including that in Jacobs Creek valley, were considered to be under the jurisdiction of the Lancaster Mennonite Conference. This remained true for about eighty years, or until the district conference of southwestern Pennsylvania was separately organized. It is a matter of regret that more detailed records of the early ministerial visits do not exist.

It so happens that there are in existence still some interesting personal letters by one Martin Mellinger, a Mennonite deacon of Lampeter township, Lancaster county, written to relatives in Ger-

19. Wenger, John C., *History of the Mennonites of the Franconia Conference,* (Scottdale, Pa., 1937), pp. 300-310.

many in the early part of the nineteenth century.[20] In these a few very interesting side lights on the congregation in Jacobs Creek valley are to be found. Martin Mellinger was frequently a travelling companion and assistant to the bishop Peter Eby of Pequea, Lancaster county, in visiting the scattered congregations.[21] In his letters, among many other matters, Martin Mellinger describes some of the ministerial activities and the itinerant work that was carried on by the Mennonite preachers of that time. Some of the hardships they endured in the course of their travels are vividly described by him.

In the year 1825 Eby and Mellinger visited the small congregation, then but lately organized, at Morrison's Cove in what is now Blair county, Pennsylvania. It is possible that they travelled yet farther west on that occasion, even as far as Westmoreland county, although there is no direct evidence that they did so. The ministers of Westmoreland and Fayette counties also kept in direct touch with the older congregations in the eastern settlements, especially those from where they had come originally. It is mentioned in the Mellinger letters, for instance, that Abraham Stauffer of Jacobs Creek in the year 1824 was visiting in Lancaster county. If at the age of seventy-two years, just two years before his death, Preacher Stauffer made a visit to that county, it is only natural to think that he probably travelled back and forth numerous times between Jacobs Creek and Lancaster county during the thirty-six years that he lived in Fayette county. On the occasion mentioned in the letters, of his visit there in 1824, and upon the request of the Lancaster ministers, Abraham Stauffer came home by the way of Morrison's Cove and ministered to the congregation there, which had been organized earlier that same year by ministers from Lancaster county. Stauffer baptized nine persons and held communion services during his stop at Morrison's Cove on the way home.[22]

Martin Mellinger makes several other references to Jacobs Creek in his letters. He says in one letter that some time before the year

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20. "The Correspondence of Martin Mellinger," translated and edited by Harold S. Bender, in *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* Vol. V (1931), pp. 42-64. References to Jacobs Creek occur on pages 53, 56, 57, 62, of the above article.

21. Landis, Ira D., "Bishop Peter Eby of Pequea," *Menn. Qr. Rev.* Vol. XIV (1940), pp. 41-51.

22. This is the direct evidence that Abraham Stauffer was an elder or bishop. The congregation at Morrison's Cove had a resident minister and deacon, and the fact that Stauffer was sent there to hold the special services proves that he was a bishop.

1803 the Skippack brethren and the Lancaster brethren were engaged upon the task of compiling hymns from different sources for the making of a new Mennonite hymnbook. Numerous suggestions and hymn selections, he tells his correspondent, had also been received for the proposed hymnbook from places as far away as Virginia and Jacobs Creek. It appears therefore that the early Mennonites west of the mountains were actively interested in the promotion of singing and church music. It turned out, Mellinger says, that there were so many different hymns suggested for inclusion in the new hymnbook that the conjoint committee from Skippack and from Lancaster, when they met to decide upon the final selections, could not agree on how to proceed. It was agreed therefore to allow each section to go ahead and print their own hymnbook as they saw fit. The hymnbook which was subsequently published by the Skippack brethren in 1803 was entitled, *Die Kleine Geistliche Harfe der Kinder Zions.*[23] The Lancaster brethren printed their hymnbook a year later, in 1804, entitled *Unpartheyisches Gesangbuch.* The former of these, *Kleine Geistliche Harfe,* seems to have been the one used by the congregation in Westmoreland county.[24]

As part of the picture of the development of the Mennonite congregation in Jacobs Creek valley in the first half of the nineteenth century, one must keep in mind the constant movement of population in the country at that time. By the year 1815 the tide of migration into the state of Ohio began to get under way. Numbers of the Mennonite settlers or of descendants whose parents had settled here twenty years before now joined in the wholesale trek westward in the quest for newer and cheaper lands. And although some were still moving into this locality from the eastern counties during the first half of the century, the congregation did not increase so rapidly in numbers as might be expected. A passing reference to several local families and their migratory movements, as examples, will indicate something of how the people were at that time scattering out and moving freely from here to other places. An illustration is

23. Wenger, *op. cit.,* pp. 312-314. Skippack in these citations refers to the Mennonite conference in the eastern counties of the state, now known as the Franconia Mennonite Conference.

24. Through the courtesy of Miss Florence Loucks, Scottdale, Pa., the Historical Library of the Mennonite Publishing House recently received a copy of the *Kleine Geistliche Harfe,* second edition (1811), which once belonged to Daniel Fretz (1792-1873) of East Huntingdon township and was neatly inscribed by him on the date of his baptism, May 1, 1814.

the family of David Funk, the Mennonite elder from Bucks county, who settled here in 1800. Of his eight children who married and had families, only one or two lived in Pennsylvania at the time of their death. A number of them moved to Wayne county, Ohio, and some to other counties of the same state.[25] The family of Martin Overholt, mentioned above, is another typical illustration of the same migratory movement. The family of Preacher Joseph Sherrick experienced the same scattering out to a lesser extent. One branch of the Loucks family settled in Indiana. Some of the Mumaws moved into Holmes and Tuscarawas counties in Ohio. And so the story could be continued of Weltys, Tinstmans, Overholts, and others from this congregation migrating and settling in Butler county, Pennsylvania, in Mahoning, Wayne, Tuscarawas, Seneca counties in Ohio, and at various points in Indiana, Michigan, Illinois, and Iowa.

By the year 1840, which in this discussion has been rather arbitrarily set as the end of the earliest period of the Mennonite congregation in Jacobs Creek valley, the circumstances of the Mennonites in this section as far as we know them, may be briefly summarized. The earliest incoming Mennonites had been busy with the temporal occupations of building their homes, improving their lands, establishing various local and community industries. Economic opportunities were abundant. The Mennonite congregation had been growing steadily though slowly in the size of its membership, however with much shifting of population, since the people were moving in and out of the settlement continually. Meanwhile the members who stayed and became established in the locality attained to competency and independence of economic standing during these first fifty years of the history. It appears that in those years there was no closely organized congregational life such as is familiar in connection with a congregation today. The Mennonites who lived in the community went to meeting every two weeks, or as frequently

25. A story related of John Funk, son of Bishop David Funk of Westmoreland county, illustrates how Mennonites sometimes became affiliated with other bodies. John Funk moved from here to Wayne county, Ohio, in 1826. He was evidently a religious man, for he built what he called a "Mennonite church" on his own farm, in which he did the preaching himself. Before long his congregation began to complain that he preached too much like the Methodists. But since he owned the church, the dissatisfied ones had to go elsewhere for their worship. Later the Reverend John Winebrenner came into that community and preached in Funk's church, with the result that Funk and his flock joined the Church of God sect, and he continued as a prominent preacher in that denomination to the end of his life. *(Brief History of Henry Funck,* p. 28).

as was convenient. The entire body of communicants in the settlement considered themselves as one congregation that held its biweekly meetings alternately at the two meetinghouses, the one near Pennsville and the other located about five miles northwest from that place, at Stonerville. Baptismal services, in case there were applicants for membership, and communion services were held at least every spring. It seems not to have been the practice then to have any regular or formal transfer of membership from the congregations whence the members came in the East to the congregation at this place. That at least is the idea one gets from reading the obituary of a lady named Catharine Oberholtzer, who died in Westmoreland county in 1866.[26] The information is there given that the deceased was a member of the Deep Run Mennonite church, although she had in fact moved with her husband to Westmoreland county in 1802, and had therefore lived here for sixty-five years before her death. Perhaps the people considered themselves members of the congregation where they had been baptized as long as they lived, regardless of where they resided.

By the year 1840 the older generation of ministerial leadership had about all passed away. Joseph Sherrick died in 1811; Abraham Stauffer died in 1826; David Funk passed away in 1833; Conrad Reist in 1841; Christian Sherrick died a little after that, in 1845. Preacher Abraham Welty had moved to Ohio in 1812. But younger ministers were already ordained to take the place of those who had passed away. John D. Overholt, grandson of Henry Overholt who came here in 1800, was ordained as preacher in 1830, and three years later to the office of elder or bishop. Martin Loucks who was brought to this locality in 1800 at the age of eighteen months, was ordained as preacher in 1833. In 1843 Henry B. Moyer was ordained as minister at this place, but the next year he moved away, returning to the Deep Run congregation in Bucks county, where he spent the rest of his life.[27] The deacon in the congregation in the early part of the century was Christian Stauffer, son of the pioneer minister and elder Abraham Stauffer.[28]

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26. *Herald of Truth* Vol. IV (1867), p. 14.

27. Wenger, *op. cit.*, p. 284.

28. The direct evidence that Christian Stauffer was deacon rests on two points: first, the *Herald of Truth* Vol. IX (1872), p. 127, has the obituary of "Nancy, second wife of the late deacon Christian Stauffer"; second, on the headstone which marks his grave in the Alverton cemetery is the inscription, "Elder Christian Stauffer." It is

II. *Middle Period,* 1840-1892

The decade from 1840 to 1850, which may be considered as the beginning of the second period of the history of the Mennonite congregation in Jacobs Creek valley, marked the high point in its numerical size and prosperity. After 1850 the decline set in gradually, until in another half century the membership of the congregation had dwindled down to twenty persons or less. The actual membership at the time of the congregation's greatest prosperity has been estimated to have been two hundred or more.

One sign of the growth of the congregation up to that time is the fact that new brick meetinghouses were built, both at Pennsville and at Stonerville, which replaced the original log or wooden structures erected forty and fifty years earlier. At Stonerville two small additions were made to the ground owned by the congregation, chiefly to enlarge the burying ground. The trustees who negotiated the purchases were John Stoner, Christian Fox, and Abraham Overholt. On November 14, 1842, they bought one addition from Samuel Dillinger for the sum of thirty-one dollars and twenty-five cents. A year and a half later they bought the other addition from Michael Moyer for seventeen dollars. The year given as the date of erecting the new meetinghouse at Stonerville is 1841, and for that near Pennsville is 1852.

There were a few officials of the congregation who were called to their office during the early part of this second period. In 1845 Henry Yother was ordained as minister in the congregation, and in 1857 he was ordained to the office of elder or bishop. In 1865 he moved away from the community. The successor to deacon Christian Stauffer was Christian Stoner, grandson of the Christian Stoner who was a pioneer in East Huntingdon township. Stoner was called to the office of deacon some time before 1860, as nearly as is known. There was also a minister in the congregation by name of John Snider, who was active as a preacher around the middle of the century. Further data on his life and ministry are not available. In 1865 a young preacher, named Jonas Blauch, from Somerset county,

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assumed that "elder" here stands for deacon. For evidence that among Mennonites of that period the deacon was sometimes called "elder" see Wenger, *op. cit.,* p. 363. A deacon is also designated as "ein Aeltester" in a manuscript Mennonite Minister's Manual written by Daniel Good (d. 1850), bishop of the Mennonite Church in Virginia, a copy of which is in the Mennonite Historical Library at Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana. It seems that no trace of the fact that Christian Stauffer was a deacon has survived in the local traditions of the Mennonite congregation at Scottdale.

Pennsylvania, moved into the community to assist in the ministerial work. Thirteen years later he moved away again.

There were various causes for the slow and steady decline in membership after 1850. Some factors which contributed to the unfortunate result may be briefly stated. The leadership was evidently lacking in initiative and the conservative traditions were continued with too much tenaciousness. The German language was continued too long after the membership had changed to the use of English in everyday life. The present public school system was inaugurated in East Huntingdon township about 1834. The Mennonites evidently patronized the public schools from that time forth. Among the early school directors for the township one reads the names Overholt, Tinsman, and others that suggest persons from Mennonite families. Naturally the young people from that time forward received practically all their education in the English language. They were no longer taught regularly to read and comprehend the Bible in German, and therefore the German religious services became less and less interesting to them. Preacher Jonas Blauch was able to preach in English as well as in German, yet his efforts failed to stem the tide of decline in the congregation. Many lost interest in the congregation of their fathers. The leaders of the congregation were not aggressive in their methods, as compared with the preachers and evangelists of the newer sects that started up shortly before that time. No Sunday school was conducted in the congregation until 1894. One result of this situation was that the younger people were not gathered into the fellowship of the congregation. Numbers of them found their way into other church bodies. Not infrequently entire families withdrew from the Mennonite congregation and affiliated themselves with another denomination. And as the older generation that remained died off the congregation steadily dwindled in numbers.

In order to gain a little insight into the reasons for the loss of members from the Mennonite congregation to some of the newer Christian sects or denominations, one needs to understand somewhat the general religious movements of that era in the United States. The Mennonites were among the very oldest of the Protestant religious bodies. They ranked with the Lutheran and Reformed denominations in point of age and historic tradition. Furthermore the Mennonites were very conservative in their forms of

worship and they had no specially trained ministry. As a body they were unable in many of the newer settlements to hold their own against the aggressive efforts of the evangelistic type of religious sects when these began to swarm over the frontier as a result of the widespread Wesleyan revivalism of the period. Three of the sects that figured particularly among the Mennonite population of the Jacobs Creek area were the Church of God (Winebrennarian), the United Brethren in Christ, and the Evangelical Association. The first of these had originated through one John Winebrenner (1797-1860), a German Reformed minister of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, who had taken up with the Methodistic style of evangelism much to the embarrassment of his Reformed brethren, with the result that they finally dismissed him. The United Brethren in Christ regard Philip William Otterbein (1726-1813) as their originator. He was a German Reformed missionary who came from Germany to America and after his arrival here was taken in by the fervor of the Methodist revivalism. Only at the end of his life did he authorize the founding of a new denomination, when shortly before his death he ordained three men as ministers, among them Christian Newcomer of Lancaster county, Pennsylvania. The Evangelical Association, as it was then called, goes back for its origin to a Lutheran pastor by name of John Albright (1759-1808). These preachers and their associates had become dissatisfied with their own conservative church bodies, which they believed to be lacking in spiritual vitality. The new sects they started were part of the aftermath of the Great Awakening in America in the late eighteenth century.

It is well to appreciate the fact that the Great Awakening of that early era, which resulted from the preaching of George Whitefield and the Methodist evangelists, was a great religious blessing to this country in the pioneer stage of its development. It was the great wave of religious revivalism which swept over the American frontier that brought the Christian faith among the people who settled in the regions west of the Allegheny Mountains. Had it not been for the preaching labors of men like Francis Asbury, Peter Cartwright, and the numerous circuit riding preachers of that day the Middle West might easily have been far more pagan than it has been so far. The waves of revivalism were an integral part of American frontier life. They touched and quickened the life of many of the older denominations. Ministers like Winebrenner, Otterbein,

Albright, and even a Mennonite preacher like Martin Boehm[29] in Lancaster county, Pennsylvania, when they took up the newer methods found themselves unwelcome in their own churches. It is regarded as unlikely that any of the first three men just mentioned would have fathered separate sects even then, had it not been for Bishop Asbury's reluctance to accept German-speaking congregations into the Methodist organization. The three bodies, Church of God, United Brethren in Christ, Evangelical Association, for the origin of which they were responsible, were essentially Methodists in faith and practice, except that at the time they started they were Germans who wished to build up German-speaking congregations. The net result was that each movement in the course of time became a denomination in itself, though they early gave up the use of the German language.

The preachers of these German-speaking bodies carried on their labors at first especially among the German-speaking population of Pennsylvania and Maryland. For this reason the settlements of Dunkards, Mennonites, and Amish, along with German Lutheran and German Reformed communities, proved to be specially fertile fields for their endeavors. The fact that today all three of the church bodies above mentioned are well represented by numbers of congregations in Jacobs Creek valley and adjoining communities is the proof that their early preachers labored here with effective results. They were live and aggressive, conducted revivals and prayer meetings, stressed the type of inner religious experience which the pioneer settlers found satisfying amid the cultural loneliness of frontier life. They won many to their fellowship here as elsewhere in Mennonite communities.

Among the early United Brethren preachers was Martin Boehm, who had been a Mennonite minister in Lancaster county, Pennsylvania. At the close of his life Boehm seems to have adhered to the Methodists. Another of their most active early evangelists was Christian Newcomer. He had been reared in a Mennonite home in Lancaster county. He travelled extensively in later years to preach in Mennonite and other German-speaking communities. In his journal Newcomer recorded a number of visits he made in Westmoreland county. One entry in 1800 is as follows: "From thence

29. Weaver, M. G., *Mennonites of Lancaster Conference* (Scottdale, Pa., 1931), pp. 103-105. Gerberich, A. H., *The Brenneman History* (Scottdale, Pa., 1938), pp. 396, 397.

I came to Mr. George Mumaw's, a relation of mine in Westmoreland county, and stayed for the night." In 1803, 1809, and later he preached again in the vicinity of Mt. Pleasant.[30] The names of Mennonite descendants in this region are frequently found among the early organizers and supporters of the local United Brethren congregations as, for example, at Mt. Pleasant, Fairview, Mt. Olive, Mt. Nebo, and others. It is notable too that comparatively few of the families of Mennonite descendants who moved from Westmoreland and Fayette counties to states farther west seem to have helped build up permanent Mennonite congregations in the places where they settled. Instead one finds them in large numbers helping to build up congregations of United Brethren, and of other bodies.

How early the Winebrennarian preachers labored among the Mennonite population in Jacobs Creek valley is uncertain. By 1840 there was a small congregation of the Church of God people at Old Bethany, a few miles north of Stonerville, and another in what was called the Landis neighborhood, south of Stonerville. Later the two were combined into one congregation at Stonerville, where their preaching services were at the first held in the Mennonite meetinghouse, before their own house of worship was built.[31] Today there are large congregations of the Church of God denomination at Alverton and Mt. Pleasant. Not much is known about the early work of the Evangelical Association in this section. When the Paradise Evangelical Church in Bullskin township, Fayette county, was first built, the Stouffers in that vicinity figured prominently in its organization. Descendants from Mennonite settlers also figured in other church organizations in this and near-by communities, notably in the Pennsville Baptist, before mentioned, the Jacobs Creek Methodist, the Bethel Church of Christ, as well as other churches located in Scottdale and Mt. Pleasant.

Bearing in mind therefore the religious activity of the newer denominations, the natural conservatism of the Mennonite body, the

30. Albert, *op. cit.*, p. 261. The vicinity of Mt. Pleasant was in the early days a particularly active center for the United Brethren in Christ in this part of Pennsylvania. Their first general ministerial conference was held there in 1815, in the old Bonnett schoolhouse about two miles east of the borough. A small marble marker today preserves the memory of the occasion. Their first attempt to establish a church college, or institute as it was then called, was made at Mt. Pleasant in 1850. After five years the project was discontinued there and the school transferred to Westerville, Ohio, where Otterbein College was established.

31. *Scottdale* (Pa.) *Independent-Observer*, November 10, 1939.

migration of many to other places, the decline of the Mennonite congregation can be better understood. There can be no doubt that Mennonite ministers from different places travelled and visited back and forth between the various settlements and congregations during the period around the middle of the century, just as has been noted that they did in the early part of the century. Exactly how much of this interchange of visits was carried on it is difficult to say. The records are very meager. Beginning in 1864 the records become more numerous, for in that year the first denominational periodical was started when John F. Funk, then of Chicago, began publishing the *Herald of Truth* for circulation among Mennonites.

It is significant that from its very first year of publication there were reported in the *Herald of Truth* the visits of travelling ministers in Westmoreland and Fayette counties. It will be of interest to note those visits which are reported in the *Herald,* for they do give one some conception of the activities of Mennonite ministers and particularly of some who visited the congregation in Jacobs Creek valley during the twenty-five years from 1865 to 1890. By implication one can also therefrom have an idea of such visits to this place earlier than 1865. It must be borne in mind too that not all such visits were reported in print, and that there may have been more ministers who stopped in Westmoreland county than are reported in the denominational publication. In passing it may be noted that so far as the reports in the *Herald of Truth* go, the ministers at this place, Martin Loucks and John D. Overholt, who were both quite old at this time, seem no longer to have travelled any distance for preaching in other congregations. Their presence at Masontown, Pennsylvania, is referred to, but not elsewhere. When they were younger men they no doubt travelled farther afield for preaching among Mennonite congregations. Of John D. Overholt it is known that at one period of his career as a bishop he made annual trips of considerable distance in the performance of his duties as an elder. It is said that these journeys took him as far west as Columbiana county, Ohio.

Beginning in 1864, some of the visiting and travelling ministers who reported visits to Westmoreland county were the following: In November, 1864, David Sherk of Berlin, Ontario, stopped in this vicinity. He wrote of it as follows[32]: "From here we went to Brad-

32. *Herald of Truth* Vol. I (1864), p. 80.

ford Station, Fayette county, from there to Abraham Oberholzer's in Westmoreland county, where we again stopped and in an entirely strange neighborhood were received in a very friendly manner. And after a visit and meeting, as usual, we again left this neighborhood on Friday the 20th." Samuel Blough of Johnstown, Pennsylvania, reported a visit he made to Westmoreland county in October, 1866. John M. Brenneman of Elida, Ohio, reported a visit he made in Westmoreland, Fayette, Somerset, and Cambria counties, Pennsylvania, in May and June, 1869. He ends his report with some sober remarks on the worldly attitudes he observed among some of the people in the places he visited.[33]

Daniel Brenneman and Joseph Sommers, from Indiana, visited Masontown, West Overton, and Johnstown in Pennsylvania in November, 1871.[34] Jonas Blauch, the minister who lived in this vicinity from 1865 to 1878, wrote a note for the *Herald of Truth* specially for the benefit of travelling ministers as follows[35]: "We have here two meetinghouses and three ministers. We have meeting every Sabbath. Names and addresses of ministers: John D. Overholt, Martin Long, Martin Blauch, West Overton, Westmoreland county, Pa. Ministers travelling west on the Pennsylvania R. R. will stop at Greensburg and take the stage to Mount Pleasant, where they will inquire for John D. Overholt. Those travelling east from Pittsburgh on the Connellsville R. R. will stop at Bradford and inquire for Jonas Blauch, who lives about three miles north of that place, on the Pottsburg road, and will be happy to entertain them."

The mention of "meeting every Sabbath" in the above quotation is of interest. Evidently beside Blauch's preaching in English, the attempt made at that time to revive the life of the congregation included also the holding of religious services every Sunday for a time. Of course, the meeting every Sunday was held alternately at the two meetinghouses. The implication of Preacher Blauch's statement seems to be that the practice at this time was a departure from the earlier custom of holding meeting every two weeks alternately at the two houses. How long the weekly services were continued is unknown. Probably not for long, since the older custom was followed again later.

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33. *Ibid.*, Vol. III (1866), p. 97; Vol. VI (1869), p. 104.

34. *Ibid.*, Vol. VIII (1871), p. 188.

35. *Ibid.*, Vol. III (1866), p. 88. Evidently the typesetters had difficulty in making out the handwriting, judging from the errors in this note; "Long" is for Loucks, the second "Martin" should be Jonas, and "Pottsburg" is for Pittsburgh.

There are later reports of visits by itinerant preachers. Daniel Brenneman about 1872 made a number of visits to the congregation at Masontown, Pennsylvania, which was quite active and aggressive in evangelistic endeavors at that time. One report says[36]: "Daniel Brenneman and family with others, and a goodly number of brethren and sisters from Masontown visited the sacramental meeting in Westmoreland county." This was in June, 1872. It appears that the congregation in Westmoreland county was often passed by when Mennonite ministers travelled through western Pennsylvania, if one may judge from the absence of mention in the reports of their trips. Numerous visits by ministers among the congregations at Masontown, Johnstown and in Somerset county, at various places in Ohio, Virginia, Maryland are reported in the *Herald of Truth,* with no corresponding mention of stopping off in Westmoreland county. The local interest seemed to be at a low ebb. Bishop Henry Yother had moved away from Westmoreland county in 1865. After his wife died he went west to live with his children, first in Illinois, and later in Nebraska. Preacher Martin Loucks died in 1869. John D. Overholt was getting well up in years. His death occurred in 1878. Jonas Blauch was the younger preacher, and he was able to preach in the English language as well as in German. But he moved away from here about the time of Bishop Overholt's death. Apparently the local situation was discouraging, and as time proved no revival in the congregation was possible for another fifteen years.

It was in the years 1873 to 1876 that the preliminary steps were taken which led to the organization of the Southwestern Pennsylvania Mennonite Church Conference. The first preliminary meeting of bishops, ministers, and deacons for this purpose was held in the Stonerville meetinghouse on May 21, 1875. After the death of John D. Overholt and the moving away of Jonas Blauch, the only resident official left in the congregation at this place was the deacon Christian Stoner. In July, 1879, the *Herald of Truth* reports communion services held at Stonerville on May 17, 18 previously, conducted by John Durr of Masontown and Jacob Snyder of Blair county, Pennsylvania.[37] The annual church conference of the district was held in the Stonerville meetinghouse in the year 1881. At this session the conference decided that the ministers John Durr and Herman Snyder, the latter of Blair county, should be responsible to

36. *Ibid.*, Vol. IX (1872), pp. 123, 138, 139.
37. *Ibid.*, Vol. XVI (1879), p. 130.

fill the Westmoreland charge every four weeks alternately. This remained the standing arrangement for regular preaching in the congregation at this place during the last eleven years of the middle period of its history.

Travelling ministers, however, still stopped in Westmoreland county at times during these years. John S. Coffman of Elkhart, Indiana, was then beginning his extensive work as the first Mennonite evangelist in the modern sense. He stopped in the Scottdale community a number of times. Writing of a trip he made to western Pennsylvania in December, 1878, Coffman says[38]: "On the 9th we went to Scottdale, Westmoreland county, stopped with Brother Jacob Loucks, Brother Abraham Overholt, and the aged blind sister, widow of Bishop John Overholt, deceased. At candle light we held services in the church in Scottdale. Next morning we visited the widow Loucks; her daughter, a young sister was lying sick." John S. Coffman stopped here to preach on later occasions. In 1882 he was at Stonerville two days.[39] In 1884 he visited again in Westmoreland county. Of a visit here in December, 1885, he wrote the following interesting report and observation[40]: "My first stopping place was Stonerville, Westmoreland county, Pa., where there is a small congregation which is in charge of the Brethren Herman Snyder and John Durr, who alternately hold services there every four weeks. They both live at quite a distance in opposite directions from this little church, and they have taken upon themselves quite a burdensome task. The members here are very grateful for these services and seem satisfied as far as themselves are concerned, but it is my opinion that with the opposition our people here have against them it will take more effort to build up the Church with any degree of success than can be put forth in holding one or two meetings every four weeks. I am glad, however, that I saw some prospects for the prosperity of the church here if sufficient effort is made in the proper way."

Among the other Mennonite ministers from a distance who are recalled by persons still living as having preached for the congregation during this period were, C. B. Brenneman and C. C. Beery of Ohio, Daniel Roth of Washington county, Maryland. From Somer-

38. *Ibid.*, Vol. XVI (1879), p. 53. As there was no Mennonite meetinghouse in Scottdale at that date the church referred to was of some other denomination.
39. *Ibid.*, Vol. XIX (1882), p. 58.
40. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXII (1885), p. 377.

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set and Cambria counties, Pennsylvania, the preachers who occasionally filled appointments were H. H. Blauch, David Keim, Levi A. Blough, G. D. Miller, D. H. Bender. In October, 1886, the annual district conference was held the second time at the Stonerville meetinghouse. The year before this John Durr upon his request had been granted permission by the conference to ordain a minister for the Stonerville congregation. In 1886 the same permission was again renewed. But as the event proved, no minister was ordained for another six years. The following quotation from the *Herald of Truth,* relating to the second conference held at Stonerville, evidently written by John Durr, is of interest[41]: "The greater number of ministers and deacons of the district were present, but quite a number were absent. The usual business was transacted, and no subjects of special interest were considered. Meetings for public worship were held on Friday evening, Saturday, and Saturday evening, and on Sunday the communion was observed. Several meetings were held the first of the week in the U. B. Church in Scottdale. All these meetings were only attended by the members and their families and a few others. There is a good interest among our dear brethren and sisters in this church, and the interest seems to be growing, but a spirit of indifference and possibly opposition is manifested by the members of some other denominations, though some are very kind and seem to wish our church godspeed." The last time the annual district conference was held in the Stonerville meetinghouse was in October, 1891.

Before closing the discussion of this second period of the history of the congregation, two items may well be mentioned for the local interest they reveal in the broader activities of the denomination as a whole. One is the fact that quite a number of persons of this congregation became subscribers to the denominational periodical, the *Herald of Truth* right from the beginning of its publication. The first few years it was the editor's practice to publish the name and address of everyone who sent in the subscription price, and also to indicate whether the subscription was for the English edition of the *Herald* or for the German, or for both. Twenty-four subscribers from this congregation are named in 1865 as having paid for the publication, five of whom ordered the German edition, thirteen the English edition, and six ordered both. In 1866 twenty-eight paid the subscription price of the *Herald of Truth,* four for the German edition, sixteen for the English, and eight for both editions. The

41. *Ibid.,* Vol. XXIII (1886), p. 346.

post office addresses at which these subscribers received the *Herald of Truth* were Mount Pleasant, West Overton, Tyrone Mills, Pennsville, and Connellsville. The other item pertains to the contribution of funds for the relief of Russian Mennonite immigrants. In the report of funds received at Elkhart, Indiana, for the benefit of the numerous immigrants who came from southern Russia to America in the early 1870s it is recorded that the church at Mt. Pleasant, Westmoreland county, Pennsylvania, sent one hundred dollars to the Russian Aid Fund. The money was sent in, according to the report, by Christian Stoner, who was the deacon in the congregation at that time.[42]

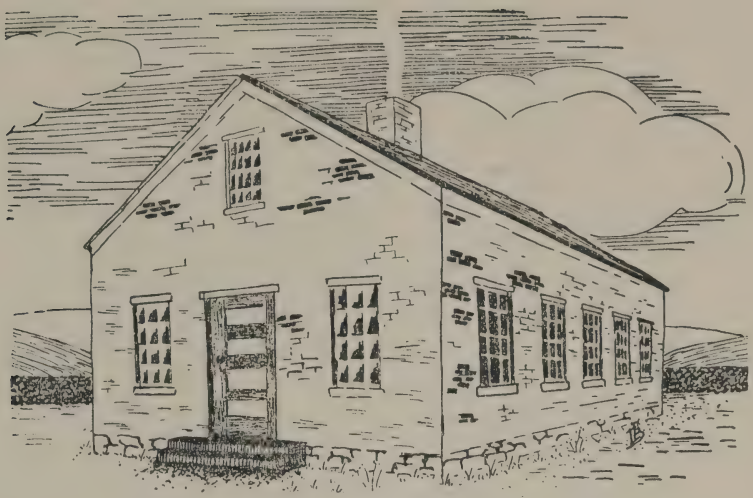
The second period of the history of the Mennonite congregation in the valley of Jacobs Creek, the period of decline and disintegration, was drawing toward the close of its unhappy phase as the one hundredth anniversary of the settlement's beginning came around. Fortunately there were then already visible stirrings and hopeful signs of a reawakening near at hand for the small congregation which remained. The story of the third half century of the congregation's history will prove to be more pleasant and encouraging to contemplate.

III. *Recent Period,* 1892-1940

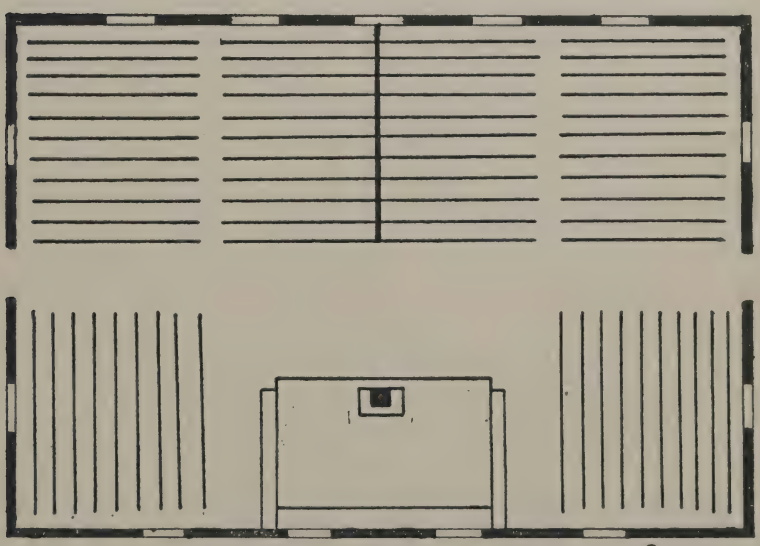
By the year 1890 the Mennonite congregation of Westmoreland county had decreased in numbers to around twenty active members. The leading causes of this decline have been pointed out before. Already in 1882 it was reported in a local history that the Mennonite congregation at Stonerville numbered less than forty members none of whom were under forty years of age. After the death of John D. Overholt in 1878 and the moving away of Jonas Blauch in the same year the congregation was left without a resident minister. Bishop J. N. Durr of Masontown lived nearest by, but he was over thirty miles away. He was an aggressive minister and was concerned to do what he could to revive the congregation at Stonerville and see it prosper again.

The local interest in these years was kept alive by a few devoted members of the congregation who did not lose faith and hope. Deacon Christian Stoner, though advanced in age, was still active

42. *Ibid.,* Vol. XI (1874), p. 110.



Stonerville Mennonite Meetinghouse, erected 1841, drawn from description. The meetinghouse near Pennsville, built in 1852, was almost identical in construction.



Floor plan of the Stonerville Mennonite Meetinghouse, drawn from description. The plan of the Pennsville Meetinghouse was similar.

as the only resident official of the congregation. He together with Jacob S. Loucks, son of Preacher Martin Loucks then deceased, made arrangements locally for preaching appointments by travelling ministers who happened to stop in the community. Nancy Loucks, aged widow of Preacher Martin Loucks, was deeply interested in a renewed growth for the Mennonite congregation, and she did much in the way of encouraging her grandchildren to become Christians and unite with the church of their ancestors. She lived to see several of her grandsons become the leaders of the congregation.

Abraham O. Overholt, long active in the congregation as song leader, was another of the faithful supporters during the lean years. At the beginning of the recent period of the congregation's history the only young persons who had united with the body were two sons from the Jacob S. Loucks family, Joseph Loucks and Aaron Loucks. The other members were persons past middle life or already old in years. The members of the congregation in 1893, the year the meetinghouse in Scottdale was built, were: Nancy Loucks, John Strohm, Jacob S. Loucks and wife Mary, Anna Loucks, Elizabeth Loucks, Joseph R. Loucks, John L. Lowe and wife Christina, Christopher S. Lowe and wife Elizabeth, Lowry Johnson, Aaron Loucks,[43] Leah Keiser, John F. Stauffer, Annie S. Overholt.

Joseph and Aaron Loucks as young Christians were interested and active in doing Christian work. Upon their own initiative they conducted a community Sunday school in the White Schoolhouse, one mile west of Scottdale. This school was carried on during the summer months at least four years prior to 1894, the year that the Mennonite Sunday school was started in Scottdale. It was held in the afternoons and preaching services were sometimes held in connection with the Sunday school when a visiting minister happened to be in the community.

Bishop John Durr's efforts to ordain leaders in the congregation after a considerable number of years, at last bore fruit. The available material from which to select candidates for the offices to be filled was naturally very limited. In May, 1892, four months after Deacon Christian Stoner's death, the latter's son-in-law Joseph R. Loucks was ordained to the office of deacon for the congregation.

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43. The author acknowledges his indebtedness to Aaron Loucks, of Scottdale, Pa., for much help received in preparing the present history of the Mennonites in Westmoreland county. Invaluable have been the data and first-hand information received from him on the recent period of this history, as also on the latter part of the middle period.

On September 18 of the same year Aaron Loucks was ordained as minister upon the voice and counsel of the congregation. Bishop Durr officiated in these ordinations, and he continued to serve as the overseeing bishop of the congregation for five years longer.

Aaron Loucks was twenty-eight years old when he after considerable hesitation accepted the call of the congregation and of the bishop in charge and was installed in the office of minister. He was by occupation a farmer and had acquired only such education as the public schools of the day afforded. Through personal application and extensive reading he had gained a considerable knowledge of the Bible. Not only did Loucks after his ordination preach for his home congregation but he soon made visits to other Mennonite congregations in western Pennsylvania. Preaching visits that he made to Clearfield, Blair, Cambria, and Somerset counties were early reported in the *Herald of Truth,* of Elkhart, Indiana.

In 1893, the year following Aaron Loucks' ordination, the first Mennonite meetinghouse in the borough of Scottdale was erected. It happened that the Loucks families, who composed a large part of the small congregation and were specially interested in reviving its life, lived in and near this town. The sentiment among them was that it would be an advantage to establish the center of the congregation's life at this place rather than attempt a revival of the work at the Stonerville meetinghouse, which was three miles away. After the idea had developed in a general way for some time, a meeting of the members was held at the Jacob S. Loucks home in Scottdale on July 22, 1893. At this meeting of members of the congregation the decision was made to erect a meetinghouse in Scottdale at once. The site for the building on the corner of Grove and Market Streets was donated by Jacob S. Loucks. The ground was then a piece of his farm. Much of the cost of the building was also paid by Jacob Loucks, who during the twenty years before had accumulated considerable financial capital from the sale of town building lots from his farm as well as from community industrial enterprises in which he was engaged.

The work on the new meetinghouse was started on August 4, less than two weeks after the decision was made to build. By the beginning of December the building was completed and ready for use. The structure was of brick, 34 by 50 feet in dimensions, erected at a cost of $3,000.00. Special services of dedication were held on Sunday,

December 3, 1893, at which time Preacher John S. Coffman of Elkhart, Indiana, was present as the principal speaker. For two weeks immediately following the date of dedication Coffman conducted nightly evangelistic meetings, the first ever held by Mennonites in this area. About a month after the close of these meetings, on January 21, 1894, the first new members were received into the congregation. Three were admitted through baptism, namely, John Loucks, Cora Loucks, and Ada Loucks. Amelia Loucks, wife of Aaron Loucks, was received by letter from the United Brethren in Christ denomination on the same date. By these events new interest had been aroused among the small membership and a beginning toward a growing congregation was made.[44]

The Scottdale Mennonite Sunday School was organized soon after the close of the first evangelistic meetings. It opened on January 7, 1894. John Loucks was chosen as the first superintendent, and Ada Loucks as the first secretary. No detailed reports of the early years of the Sunday school have been preserved. There is however a report from the Scottdale Sunday school included in the statistical report given at the third General Mennonite Sunday School Conference, held at Pleasant Valley meetinghouse in Lagrange county, Indiana, October 3-5, 1894. This is what is given about the Scottdale Sunday School:[45] "Total enrollment (estimated), 50; classes, 5; teachers, 5; average attendance, 35; amount of collections, $20.23."

For nine years after its first organization the Sunday school in Scottdale met every Sunday in the afternoons. It was considered the most suitable time for several reasons. The holding of morning services for preaching every two weeks at the Stonerville and Pennsville meetinghouses was still continued as before. Also the afternoon sessions made it possible for some people in the community who attended other places of worship in the morning to attend the Mennonite Sunday school in the afternoon. This added to the attendance and the general interest. In the early years, from 1894 to about 1902, the schedule of regular services at the Scottdale meetinghouse was as follows: Every two weeks (the Sundays with no preaching at either of the old meetinghouses), preaching in the morning; every Sunday afternoon, Sunday school; every Sunday evening, preaching.

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44. *Herald of Truth*, Vol. XXXI (1894), p. 58.
45. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXXI (1894), p. 330.

Preacher Aaron Loucks from the first was interested in promoting the growth of the congregation and in doing aggressive Christian work. He early took a number of important steps which revealed his vision in planning for the promotion of the spiritual life of the congregation. For one thing, he looked abroad for some young man who might be invited to come in and assist in the leadership of the congregation. After consultation with other ministers of the conference district, he invited Jacob A. Ressler of Ronks, Lancaster county, Pennsylvania, to locate at Scottdale. Ressler welcomed the invitation and in April, 1895, with his wife moved to Scottdale. He was a graduate of Millersville State Normal School and had some experience as a public school teacher. While living at Scottdale he engaged in teaching rural school for several years. Within three months of his arrival in the congregation Ressler was nominated for ordination to the ministry, and upon favorable vote of the congregation he was ordained to that office in the Stonerville meetinghouse on July 28, 1895, by Bishop Isaac Eby of Lancaster county.[46] Aaron Loucks at once invited Ressler to share equally in the responsibility of filling the preaching appointments of the congregation.

Another important step taken about this time by Aaron Loucks was that of securing for himself some specialized preparation in Bible study to help him in his work as a preacher and leader in the congregation. The result of his desire in this direction was that in October, 1894, he enrolled as a student at Moody Bible Institute, in Chicago. There he pursued courses in Bible study with both inspiration and profit. In New Testament and doctrinal courses his teacher was R. A. Torrey, while in the Old Testament and Prophecy courses he was under the instruction of W. W. White. For eight months, until June of the next year, he continued his studies in Chicago. After that he returned to his congregation to carry on the duties of a preacher and pastor.

Besides his classroom studies in Chicago Aaron Loucks made numerous contacts and received impressions which were destined to bear fruit in his later work as a leader in the home congregation and in his denomination at large. The first city mission work carried on

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46. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXXII (1895), p. 249. Jacob A. Ressler's manuscript diaries have been found very useful for information on the life and activity of the Scottdale congregation in the years 1895-1898. Lina Z. Ressler, of Scottdale, Pa., deserves special thanks for kindly loaning the diaries of her late esteemed husband for use in preparing the present article.

by Mennonites had been opened in Chicago in the year before Loucks went there as a Bible student. Naturally he lent his assistance to the work of the new mission as he had opportunity. Thereby he got an insight into the need and possibilities for doing missionary work in the cities. His firsthand interest in the Chicago Mennonite Mission is reflected in the fact that thereafter frequent contributions were reported to that cause from the Scottdale congregation.

Aaron Loucks attended some of the early Sunday school conferences held among the Mennonites. He was present at the second General Sunday School Conference, held at the Zion Mennonite church near Bluffton, Ohio, in 1893, and at the third, held near Middlebury, Indiana, in 1894. His vision of the possibilities for such meetings held for the benefit of Sunday-school workers was among the factors which led to the beginning of the Mennonite Sunday School Conference of the southwestern Pennsylvania district, the second annual session of which was held with the Scottdale congregation in October, 1896, and which has continued to meet annually since then just prior to the annual church conference.

From observing and learning about the Bible conference movement as it was then carried on by Bible teachers like R. A. Torrey and others, Aaron Loucks conceived the idea that Bible teaching of that type would do much toward supplying the existing need of more basic Bible instruction for the rank and file of the membership of the Mennonite denomination. He began to advocate Bible conferences for the Mennonite Church, conferences for which the ablest Bible teachers of the church would be brought together to give series of lessons and lectures from outlines on the Bible in daily sessions for a period of two weeks, more or less. He succeeded in awakening interest among his younger co-workers, with the result that the first Bible conference held in a Mennonite congregation was conducted at Scottdale for two weeks beginning on December 28, 1896. From this experiment as a beginning the Bible conference movement gradually spread over a large part of the Mennonite denomination reaching its height perhaps twenty years later.

After the meetinghouse in Scottdale was built and had become the center of the congregation's activities, regular services nevertheless continued to be held at the old Stonerville house until the end of 1898. Every four weeks on Sunday mornings one of the ministers from Scottdale went there to preach. The audiences were generally

small. The diary of one minister repeatedly reports audiences ranging from five to eleven people. Sometimes he returned home without preaching at all because no one came out for the meeting.

When the services at Stonerville (by this time called Alverton) were at last discontinued entirely, the school district of East Huntingdon township expressed the wish to secure the property for use as school grounds. On June 2, 1899, the church lot and building were sold for the sum of one thousand dollars and the old meetinghouse, the second one on that site, which had served as a place of worship for nearly sixty years was taken down. The piece of ground which had been acquired by trustees of the Mennonite congregation a few months more than one hundred years before (in March, 1799) became the site of a public school building which still stands today and is used for that purpose.

The cemetery plot adjacent to the Stonerville meetinghouse already for twenty years previous to the sale of the church grounds had no longer been under the care of the Mennonite congregation. On October 5, 1878, the trustees Christian Stoner and Jacob S. Loucks leased it to the Mennonite Cemetery Association, a community organization, for a term of nine hundred and ninety-nine years for the consideration of one dollar.[47] Members of the Scottdale congregation have continued to use this cemetery for burial purposes, except that in more recent years some have begun to bury in the Scottdale Cemetery.

Regular services in the other of the old meetinghouses, the one near Pennsville, south of Jacobs Creek, had been discontinued for a time in the 1880s, because scarcely any members lived near there, and because no preacher was resident in the congregation. Occasional services may have been held there even then. After the ordination of Aaron Loucks as preacher regular preaching services were held again at that place. The custom was to have a preaching service on Sunday mornings every four weeks and alternating with the similar service at the Stonerville house. On April 19, 1882, a cyclone carried away the roof and otherwise damaged the meetinghouse. The house was repaired and used later.

In April, 1898, the Pennsville meetinghouse was again repaired, window panes replaced, painting and papering were done on the inside, lamps were installed, and an outside coalhouse was built. There-

47. Westmoreland County Archives, *Deed Book* 97, p. 38; *ibid.*, 286, p. 154.

upon Preacher J. A. Ressler held the first evening service in this house on Sunday evening, April 24, 1898. He announced to his audience that he would explain the peculiarities of the Mennonites during the next week each evening, and invited the people of the neighborhood to come out for the meetings. For the next ten evenings preaching services were held. The audiences present ranged in size from a half dozen to an overflowing house on the second Sunday evening, on which occasion Aaron Loucks preached the sermon. At the close of these special meetings the announcement was made that there would be Sunday school at that place the next Sunday. Apparently Joseph Loucks was the superintendent of this mission Sunday school conducted in a Mennonite meetinghouse, where in the ground close by rested the bones of numerous Mennonites of an earlier day. No records of this Sunday school are known to exist. The attendance was small. On one Sunday not long after the school was started fifteen were present for the Sunday school and twenty for the preaching service. Apparently it was carried on only in the summer months, but for how many years is not clear. Possibly the services at this place were continued as late as 1901 or 1902. By the year 1903 the building was no longer used. In 1903 the council of the Scottdale Mennonite congregation authorized Aaron Loucks to dispose of the property that was left. There is record that stoves were sold and some other materials. Much of the material, it is said, was carried away by predatory persons.

The burying ground beside the Pennsville meetinghouse had been enlarged through the addition of more ground in 1885. In that year A. H. and Mary Sherrick sold to Jacob Sherrick, Joseph R. Stauffer, and Thomas Johnston, "Trustees of the Mennonite Church Graveyard," for the sum of three hundred dollars an additional piece of ground which about doubled the size of the burial ground.[48] It happened that none of the trustees named were themselves members of the Mennonite congregation. Thomas Johnston, who lived at Morgan a few miles away, voluntarily took care of the meetinghouse and the cemetery plot for many years because of his spontaneous interest in the place. This board of trustees failed to perpetuate itself and after the death of the last of the persons named, the grounds fell into complete neglect for many years. Interested parties on several occasions had the burying ground cleared off. Miss Helen

48. Fayette County Archives, *Deed Book* 102, p. 460.

Frick, daughter of the late H. C. Frick, took some active family interest in the old plot, for her father's great-grandparents, Abraham Stauffer and wife, are resting there as well as many other distant relatives. Miss Frick on one occasion paid the cost of clearing the ground and repairing the old headstones of the graves. At another time members of the present Scottdale congregation raised funds and had the grounds cleared and put in order. In recent years the trustees of the Scottdale Mennonite congregation have assumed the responsibility of keeping the grounds cleared and presentable.

For the younger and progressive element of the congregation the activities centered in the Scottdale meetinghouse from the time it was built. Besides the Sunday services already referred to, regular mid-week meetings were held at least as early as May, 1895. The nature of these varied from time to time. They are referred to variously as a Bible meeting, Bible reading, cottage meeting, and for a time in the fall of 1895 J. A. Ressler conducted a normal class, evidently for the benefit of the Sunday-school teachers.

The first evangelistic meetings by John S. Coffman have been mentioned. M. S. Steiner of Ohio held similar meetings from October 28 to November 10, 1895. The next winter the first Bible conference was held (December 28, 1896, to January 9, 1897) at which time John S. Coffman, M. S. Steiner, and D. H. Bender were present as the leading instructors. At the close of this conference, in a council meeting at the home of Jacob S. Loucks on Saturday, January 9, Preacher Aaron Loucks was chosen for the office of bishop, and on the following day, January 10, 1897, he was duly ordained to that office by Bishops Henry Yother and John Durr, assisted by J. S. Coffman. At this time Bishop Durr relinquished his charge and Aaron Loucks assumed the pastoral oversight of the Scottdale Mennonite congregation. Loucks worked in close association with the younger and aggressive ministers of the conference district and took a leading part in the conference activities. Often he travelled on visits to other congregations of the Southwestern Pennsylvania Mennonite Conference district. The congregations at Rockton in Clearfield county and at Masontown in Fayette county (after J. N. Durr moved away from there to Blair county) were under his charge. He was also active in the church activities of his denomination at large. He was among the early promoters of the Mennonite General Conference, and served on the Mennonite Board of Charitable

Homes for some time, and later on the Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities. He was also a charter member of the Mennonite Board of Education, on which he served for many years as treasurer. His brother Joseph, the deacon in the Scottdale congregation, was for some years a member of the Mennonite Evangelizing Board, though he was unable to attend their annual meetings very often.

The ministers in the congregation were early interested in spreading the gospel through local and outlying preaching appointments. The preaching services held at the two old Mennonite meetinghouses have already been described. In 1896 and 1897 one of the ministers preached one Sunday every month at a schoolhouse near Youngwood, Pennsylvania, where a few members of the congregation were then residing. In 1896 there is record of their preaching at the Swedetown schoolhouse, now called North Scottdale, where another group was holding Sunday school then. The ministers also occasionally accepted the invitation to preach for the Young Men's Christian Association in Scottdale. In 1898 and later regular preaching appointments were filled for a time at Champion, Pennsylvania, in the Evangelical Church, in which locality a few members of the Mennonite congregation were then living.

This early period of activity was somewhat interrupted in 1899 when Jacob A. Ressler was appointed as one of the first party of American Mennonite missionaries ever sent to a foreign land. He sailed for India in February, 1899. For more than two years after Ressler's departure Aaron Loucks was alone in carrying on the ministerial work of the congregation. Again he was looking for someone who might be invited to come in and assist in the leadership of the congregation. In November, 1900, A. D. Martin, a young man of twenty-one years from Greencastle, Pennsylvania, came to Scottdale "to assist in the work of the Lord in a needy field."[49] On March 10, 1901, he was ordained to the office of minister by Aaron Loucks. A. D. Martin was an active and spiritual leader, interested in preaching the gospel and in distributing religious books and Christian literature. He later married Ada, sister of Aaron Loucks.

By this time Aaron Loucks and a few of his associates in the denomination at large were definitely contemplating the possibility of developing a church-owned and controlled publishing house for the Mennonite denomination. The Mennonite Publishing Company at

49. *Gospel Herald,* Vol. V (1913), p. 703.

Elkhart, Indiana, which then served as the publication center for the church was a privately managed concern. It was at the time passing through some serious financial difficulties, and there was rather wide-spread dissatisfaction with the publication work as it was carried on at that place. The Mennonite Book and Tract Society, first organized in 1892, was the active beginning of a rival organization for distributing literature among the Mennonites. A. D. Martin, after locating at Scottdale, became the secretary-treasurer of this Society and devoted some of his time and effort to the work of selling Bibles and religious books for that society. The organization never had its headquarters at this place, Martin simply serving as one of its officers and agents among a number who worked in different localities. The local interest at Scottdale in the work of the Book and Tract Society is reflected in the fact that the Scottdale congregation was one among the few that made regular semiannual contributions toward its work in the years 1897-1899.

The final step of putting a new publishing organization into operation at Scottdale was taken in 1905. A new denominational periodical, the *Gospel Witness,* was issued for the first time in April of that year. The Gospel Witness Company, which was the organization behind this publishing venture, was managed by Aaron Loucks and A. D. Martin, the former donating his services to the company for the first number of years. The place of publication was Scottdale, and the company was composed of nine brethren of the Mennonite Church who pledged themselves for a certain amount of capital to be used in publishing a religious paper in the interests of the church.[50] The work of the new publishing company was a success from the first. The response to its program was general and grew steadily. A church-wide publication board was organized in February, 1908, which took over the interests of the Gospel Witness Company and purchased part of the interests of the Mennonite Publishing Company at Elkhart, Indiana. The business has been conducted with increasing volume and support through the thirty-two years since. The story of the Mennonite Publishing House, as the institution in Scottdale has been known since 1908, is an interesting chapter in itself and too long to be undertaken in this discussion. Its location at this place has to a large extent figured in the growth and development of the Mennonite congregation at this place, as will appear far-

50. *Herald of Truth,* Vol. XLII (1905), p. 379.

ther on. The fact that a number of able men of the Mennonite church were called to Scottdale to serve on the staff of the Mennonite Publishing House has made the Scottdale congregation one of unusual prominence in the denomination as a whole. Among the men thus called to Scottdale who deserve special mention for their influence upon the church at large are, Daniel Kauffman (1865-) J. A. Ressler (1867-1936), John Horsch (1867-1941), and Levi Mumaw (1879-1935).

The year 1903 in some respects marks the beginning of a steadily increasing organization and of increased activities in the Scottdale Mennonite congregation. Already in January, 1898, the congregation had been legally incorporated. The Sunday school, which from 1894 to 1902 met in the afternoons, now was held in the morning before the preaching service.[51] The beginning of regular semiannual business meetings for the congregation dates from April 2, 1903. For a time the business meetings were held in August and February. Later they were changed to July and January, the months in which they still are held. During the first years it was the custom to devote a part of the sessions to a set program of talks and topics relating to the life and work of the congregation. The business year of the organization regularly ends in July, and at the July meeting full reports are given and the annual election of officers and committees takes place.

The beginnings of various organizations and committees may be briefly summarized. The first organization among the sisters of the congregation for supplying garments for the needy is reported in February, 1905, when Dillia Brilhart was named president and Zoe Johnson secretary-treasurer. This organization, known as the Dorcas Sewing Circle, has continued without interruption since that time. It is an active organization and holds monthly meetings. An intermediate sewing circle with regular monthly meetings grew out of the Sunday-school class organization of a class of girls in 1926. Among the younger girls a junior sewing circle was organized in 1937, which meets monthly.

The first recorded appointment of the Sunday Evening Committee was at the business meeting of July, 1909, when H. C. Deffenbaugh, Henry Hernley, and M. K. Smoker were appointed. This was the precursor of the present Young People's Bible Meeting Committee.

51. *Ibid.*, Vol. XL (1903), p. 61.

A Wednesday Evening Committee was first appointed by the business meeting in July, 1909. The first appointees on this committee were H. F. Reist, A. D. Martin, Martha Martin, Lula Reist. The present Prayer Meeting Committee is the successor to this committee. However, as mentioned before, regular mid-week meetings in the congregation were held almost from the very beginning of the congregation's activities in Scottdale. These meetings, before 1909, were arranged and directed by the ministers of the congregation. In 1903 the Wednesday evening meeting was referred to as a Bible Reading. In 1906 it was reported that a Bible study class in Life of Christ was organized with D. H. Bender as leader which met on Wednesday evenings. The programs of the Wednesday evening meetings have been varied from time to time. In 1914 a class in Sunday-school teacher training, in charge of H. F. Reist, met on Wednesday evenings, and a special cottage meeting committee was appointed at that time for conducting cottage prayer meetings on other evenings of the week. Cottage meetings of this type have long been held in homes every week—one or more. At present these are arranged by the superintendents of the three Sunday schools acting together as a committee.

The finance committee of the congregation was first established by the business meeting in 1909, when Aaron Loucks, M. K. Smoker, and John R. Loucks were appointed. Its duty is to arrange the annual budget and to allocate the funds received as unspecified contributions from the congregation. A charity committee was first appointed in 1912, consisting of the deacon of the congregation and two others. They look after the distribution of local charities, both among the members and among needy persons of the community. The Summer Bible School Committee has been in existence as a standing committee since 1928, although sessions of Summer Bible school were held as early as 1926, as will be noted later.

The personnel of the ministerial leadership in the congregation since the turn of the century has been in a great measure affected by the founding and development of the Mennonite Publishing House as a denominational institution at Scottdale. Aaron Loucks served as overseeing bishop of the congregation until 1936. All the ordinations of officials in the congregation since the turn of the century have been of individuals who came to Scottdale from other places as employees of the Mennonite Publishing House. A number were

ministers before coming here. The ordination of A. D. Martin as minister in 1901 has been mentioned. He served in that office until 1910 when because of ill health he was forced to retire. He then moved with his family back to Franklin county, Pennsylvania, where he died in 1913. John A. Brilhart, a minister from Clearfield county, Pennsylvania, first moved to Scottdale in 1900. In 1902 he moved away again and lived elsewhere for a time, but in 1907 located permanently at Scottdale, where he served as supply preacher until his death in 1937.

D. H. Bender, a minister and teacher from Springs, Pennsylvania, in Somerset county, in 1906 was engaged by the Gospel Witness Company as office editor of the *Gospel Witness*. He had previously served for a year and a half as editor of the *Herald of Truth* at Elkhart, Indiana. He filled the position at Scottdale until 1909, when he resigned to accept the principalship of the newly established Academy and Bible School at Hesston, Kansas. Daniel Kauffman, minister and bishop from Versailles, Missouri, who had been the editor-in-chief of the *Gospel Witness* from its inception and of the *Gospel Herald* which succeeded it in 1908, located at Scottdale in 1909. He serves on the ministerial staff of the congregation and has had the bishop oversight of the congregation since 1936.

Jacob A. Ressler, who in 1899 had left the Scottdale congregation to do pioneer missionary work in India, after serving for ten years there, was unable to continue in that field, and returned to America, locating at his wife's home near Smithville, Ohio. In 1911 he was appointed editor of the Sunday-school lesson helps published by the Mennonite Publishing House. He thereupon returned to Scottdale and here served on the ministerial staff until his death in 1936. Besides being minister Ressler also held the office of bishop, having been ordained to that position at Springs, Pennsylvania, just prior to his sailing for India in 1899.

On July 2, 1916, H. Frank Reist was ordained in the Scottdale congregation upon the unanimous choice of the members to the office of minister. He had come to Scottdale in 1908 upon his appointment as the editor of the *Christian Monitor,* the monthly magazine which made its first appearance in January, 1909. Reist was a graduate of Goshen College, and was active in the Sunday school and the young people's meeting of the congregation from his first coming to this place. Three years after his ordination as minister

he was elected president of Goshen College, a position which he was forced to resign because of ill health after less than a year of service. He then moved to southern Texas where he still serves as a pastor and minister in a Mennonite congregation at Falfurrias.

Deacon Joseph R. Loucks, ordained in 1892, filled that office until his death in 1926. The same year, on June 20, Charles B. Shoemaker was chosen by lot to serve the congregation in the office of deacon. He had first entered the employment of the Mennonite Publishing House in 1914. Since 1935 he has served as secretary-treasurer of the institution. John L. Horst, the present pastor of the Scottdale Mennonite congregation, was chosen by lot and ordained to the office of minister on December 1, 1929. He first entered the employment of the Mennonite Publishing House in 1920 in the capacity of a linotype operator. Later he became editor of the *Christian Monitor,* a position which he still holds. Abram J. Metzler, after serving as minister and bishop at Masontown, Pennsylvania, was elected to the position of general manager of the Mennonite Publishing House in 1935. Since locating at Scottdale he is on the ministerial staff of the congregation at this place, though the wide demand for his services as preacher in other congregations calls him away on Sundays much of the time.

The Scottdale Mennonite Sunday School enjoyed a slow and steady growth as the congregation was growing in size. From the time of its founding in 1894 no written records were preserved for some years. There was evidently little or no change in the organization of the school for the first six years. Its sessions were held on Sunday afternoons, as stated before, until the beginning of 1903, when they were changed to the mornings. Already by 1906 the time of its annual reorganization had been changed from January 1 to July 1, to correspond more closely with the local conference year.

The men who have served as the superintendents of the Scottdale Mennonite Sunday School from its beginning, and the years they were elected to office, are as follows: John R. Loucks, 1894-1900, 1909; David S. Loucks, 1901-1905; M. K. Smoker, 1906, 1907; H. C. Deffenbaugh, 1908; George Cutrell, 1910, 1911; Rhine Benner, 1912; H. Frank Reist, 1913-1918; Allen Christophel, 1919, 1920; Vernon Smucker, 1921-1923; Charles B. Shoemaker, 1924-1927; John L. Horst, 1928-1932; Henry Hartman, 1933-1936; Elam Hernley, 1937-1941.

This Sunday school in the beginning used the Mennonite lesson helps published at Elkhart, Indiana. After 1905 the helps published at Scottdale were used. The early hymnbooks used in the Sunday school were several different numbers of the *Gospel Hymns*. Later on the *Church and Sunday School Hymnal, Life Songs, Sheet Music of Heaven,* and *Life Songs, No.* 2 have been used. What the amount of the annual offerings in the Sunday school in the early years was is unknown. In 1916 the total contributions amounted to about $135. The amount of the annual receipts increased rapidly after that, when relief and missionary projects were taken up by the Sunday school and by separate classes in the school. For years now the Sunday school has been contributing for all purposes a total of from $700 to $900 annually, mostly for missionary and benevolent purposes. The enrollment in recent years has been around 135, with an average attendance of something less.

The early effort to carry on the extension Sunday school at the old Pennsville meetinghouse has already been noted. In the summer of 1915 an extension Sunday school was conducted at the Felgar Schoolhouse several miles west of Scottdale. It seems not to have been kept up for more than several months. The attendance ranged from about thirty to sixty. The leaders in this school were H. F. Reist and C. H. Musselman. At the present time two extension or mission Sunday schools are in operation, one in the Kingview schoolhouse in East Scottdale and the other in the North Scottdale schoolhouse.

The beginning of the extension Sunday school in East Scottdale dates from the year 1906. In October of that year a school was opened with S. A. Martin and Clayton Graybill in charge as superintendents. The sessions were held on Sunday afternoons. Six teachers were kept busy with eighty or ninety pupils, according to an early report. The average attendance from the first was around sixty. Regular preaching services were also held in connection with the Sunday school, just how frequently is not clear. During the years from 1907 to 1909 rather intensive missionary work was carried on in the East Scottdale community. Martha Martin, then a part time worker in the Mennonite Publishing House, regularly devoted a part of her time there to house to house visitation work, the distribution of literature, the circulation of Sunday-school library books, and the supplying of clothing to needy families. The Sunday-

school library then consisted of eighty-five books which were loaned out repeatedly for reading among the members of the Sunday school. Visits made in homes averaged over fifty a month for a time. Frequent cottage prayer meetings were held in homes. The enrollment of the Sunday school in 1908 reached 128.[52] The business meeting of the Scottdale congregation that year voted to support the East Scottdale work, and appointed as a committee to look after it D. S. Loucks, M. K. Smoker, and A. D. Martin.

About the end of 1909 Martha Martin left the Scottdale community. Evidently the intensive work which she had carried on in East Scottdale for several years was not kept up after she left. In 1912 the Sunday school there was closed, just for what reasons is not clear. The business meeting of the congregation in July, 1913, appointed J. A. Ressler, Levi Mumaw, and C. A. Graybill as a committee to investigate the East Scottdale Sunday-school field in response to a call for such work to be done in that district. The report of this committee to the same meeting in January, 1914, indicated that the school in East Scottdale had been reopened before Christmas with an enrollment of fifty pupils. The committee recommended further that the sessions of the school be held on Sunday mornings, with the release of sufficient workers from the home Sunday school to carry on the extension Sunday school at the same hour. The recommendation was carried through as is evident from other reports.[53] It is interesting to note that the committee which had reopened this school at the same time recommended that the business meeting consider the advisability of erecting a chapel in East Scottdale for holding religious services, stating that two vacant lots were available for that purpose without cost. This proposal has never been carried out. At that time the Kingview schoolhouse was a frame building. The Sunday school meets today in the commodious eight-room brick schoolhouse, through the kind generosity of the local school board. Levi Mumaw was the leader of the East Scottdale Sunday School as superintendent during this middle period of its history. The average attendance in different quarters ranged from seventy down to fifty. The contributions received from the school did not always cover the expenses of its operation. The Scottdale Sunday School provided for the deficits that occurred in that school.

52. *Gospel Witness,* Vol. II (1906), p. 458; Vol. III (1907), p. 293; *Gospel Herald,* Vol. I (1908), p. 75.
53. *Gospel Herald,* Vol. VI (1914), p. 653.

In 1918 again the Sunday school in East Scottdale was closed for about two years. Among the causes for closing was the fact that a number of the active workers were called away through the military draft. On July 18, 1920, the school was opened again with about sixty in attendance, and it has been going continuously since that date. At first the sessions were again held on Sunday afternoons, but in 1922 they were changed to the mornings, the time at which the school still meets. Vernon Smucker and Elam Hernley were the superintendents at first after this reopening. C. F. Yake served as the superintendent from 1922 to 1938; David Alderfer was elected to that position in 1939, and George Smoker in 1940.

The present enrollment in the East Scottdale Sunday School is 136, with an average attendance of about 125. The school has for years been more than self-supporting financially. Many of the teachers and officers who assist in the school do considerable home visitation work in addition to their class period teaching. There is excellent interest and a good school spirit in this Sunday school. Quite a few adults attend the school regularly, as there are no churches in that particular community. Many of these folks seem to find in the East Scottdale Sunday School a real spiritual home and the privilege of religious worship and Bible study is much appreciated by them. Though numbers have attended the Sunday school for years, comparatively few from there have become active members of the Mennonite congregation, yet a number have united with the Mennonite church and supported the work of the congregation. The East Scottdale Sunday school has exerted a wholesome influence on the children and youth of the community and has at the same time served as a training school in Christian work for numerous young people of the Scottdale Mennonite congregation.

The extension Sunday school in North Scottdale dates its beginning from July 1, 1934. J. Irvin Brunk has been the superintendent there from the first. The enrollment for some years has been around one hundred, with the average attendance running somewhat less than that. This school is also self-supporting financially. The interest and the spirit in the school is good. Both these extension Sunday schools seem to be filling a real need in the communities where they are held. They are not properly independent Sunday schools, but are conducted as extension schools of the Scottdale Mennonite congre-

54. *Ibid.*, Vol. XIX (1926), p. 297; Vol. XX (1927), p. 272.

gation. The membership of the Scottdale congregation elects all the officers for these schools just as it elects the officials for its own school, and all the teachers for the extension schools are chosen from the congregation.

Summer Bible school instruction for the children from kindergarten age to high school age inclusive is given for two weeks every summer. This work started in connection with the East Scottdale extension work. The first session of summer Bible school was held in July, 1926, in the Kingview schoolhouse[54] and was repeated there in the summers following until 1935, with the exception that in 1930 and 1932 the school was held in the Mennonite meetinghouse in Scottdale. Beginning in 1936 and every summer since then, the summer Bible school conducted by the congregation has been held in the Pittsburgh Street school building, which is located about two blocks from the Mennonite church. Before 1930 the sessions of this school lasted for fifteen days, and since that date for ten days. Transportation has been regularly provided by the committee that plans the school for all the children who desire to attend from the adjacent communities. A standing committee of the congregation has general charge of the arrangements for the annual summer Bible school, with C. F. Yake acting as the director in charge. The average attendance in recent years has reached the 250 mark a number of times. The classes have largely been taught by volunteer teachers from the home congregation. The expenses, which amount to about one hundred dollars annually, are provided through special offerings and appropriations from the three Sunday schools of the congregation.

Another phase of the extension work done by the congregation, which has grown out of the East Scottdale Sunday-school work, is the holding of periodic evangelistic campaigns in that community in the form of summer tent meetings. The first meetings of this kind were held in 1922, when J. F. Bressler preached nightly for two weeks in a tent put up for that purpose. Other evangelists who have preached during these tent meetings were: C. F. Derstine, 1923; J. D. Mininger, 1924; E. J. Blough and S. E. Allgyer, 1925; John W. Hess, 1927; A. J. Metzler, 1929 and 1941; Aaron Mast, 1933; Elmer B. Moyer, 1936; Ernest Garber, 1938; Harvey Shank, 1940. All these tent meetings were held in the Kingview community except-

ing the one in 1940, which was held near the North Scottdale schoolhouse.

Regular evangelistic meetings have been held in the Scottdale Mennonite congregation, annually as a rule. A few of the earliest evangelists who preached in these meetings have been mentioned before. The later evangelists were: S. G. Shetler, 1901; A. H. Leaman, 1903; Isaac Wambold and E. S. Hallman, 1903; Abram Metzler, 1907; Daniel Kauffman and M. C. Lapp, 1908; A. D. Wenger, 1910; D. D. Miller, 1911; N. H. Mack, 1912; I. W. Royer, 1914 and 1935; C. F. Derstine, 1915; S. E. Allgyer, 1916; J. S. Shoemaker, 1917; J. F. Bressler, 1919; J. W. Hess, 1920, 1924, 1925, and 1932; John H. Mosemann, 1921; John F. Grove and N. E. Miller, 1922; C. Z. Yoder, 1923; B. B. King, 1926; Oscar Burkholder, 1927; J. F. Bressler, 1928; O. N. Johns, 1929; J. K. Bixler, 1930; J. C. Clemens, 1931; Milo Kauffman, 1933; J. D. Mininger, 1934; M. G. Brackbill, 1936; Henry J. King, 1937; Noah E. Troyer, 1938; S. J. Miller, 1939; E. M. Yost, 1939; J. Irvin Lehman, 1941.

Occasional Bible conferences, since the original one in 1896, have been held by the Scottdale congregation, as in 1912 and 1918, also at other times. The first one, in 1896, continued for two weeks, while the more recent Bible conferences have been usually from a few days to a week in length.

Mention should also be made of one other extension activity carried on for a time by workers from the Scottdale Mennonite congregation. About 1914 for several years during the summer months they conducted occasional preaching services in the Hoffman Lutheran church near Smithton, Pennsylvania. Several members of the Masontown Mennonite congregation were living in that locality then.

The annual session of the Southwestern Pennsylvania Mennonite Conference has been held in Scottdale eight times since the first meetinghouse was built here, namely in the years 1896, 1902, 1908, 1914, 1921, 1926, 1932, 1939.

Particular mention should be made of the Young People's Bible Meeting which is conducted by the congregation every Sunday evening. Just when regular young people's meeting topics and programs were first followed in these meetings is uncertain. In 1906 a report stated that the Sunday evening meetings of the congrega-

tion were helpful, having the following schedule: For the opening, fifteen minutes of singing; next a lively workers' meeting for thirty minutes; and finally a short sermon on the subject of the evening. In 1909 the business meeting of the congregation first began to elect a Sunday evening committee. In 1910 the plan was adopted of having a superintendent of the young people's meeting elected by the business meeting. H. F. Reist was elected as the first superintendent. How long this plan of organization was continued is not clear. At present a committee of the young people elected by the business meeting outlines the weekly programs and appoints the leader and speakers. The young people's meeting is not carried on as a separate organization but is simply one of the regular services conducted for the congregation as a whole. Only rarely have separate junior meetings been conducted for the benefit of the younger folks on Sunday evening.

Interest in the study of vocal music and the cultivation of congregational singing has been marked in the congregation. In the early years of the services in the Scottdale meetinghouse Joseph Loucks was active as song leader. In 1903 it was reported that regular meetings for singing were held on Saturday evenings. As early as 1904 John D. Brunk, then of Bridgewater College, conducted singing classes during a Christmas vacation period.[55] On the week days of his stay he had daily an adults' drill class at two o'clock in the afternoon, a children's drill class at four o'clock, and the chorus class at seven thirty o'clock in the evening. Singing classes have not been held with any regularity. The first hymnbook used in the Scottdale meetinghouse was *Hymns and Tunes,* later the *Church and Sunday School Hymnal* was used and at present the Mennonite *Church Hymnal.* Among the more recent song leaders in the congregation have been Levi Mumaw and Charles Shoemaker. A choral organization among the young people has been in existence for a few years, which is devoted to the study and interpretation of hymns and sacred music. A congregational literary society with monthly meetings was first organized in 1936.

The membership of the Scottdale Mennonite congregation began with sixteen active members in 1893. Its growth was slow at first, yet the number of communicants increased steadily from the first. In 1900 a membership of thirty-five was reported. By 1907 it had

55. *Herald of Truth,* Vol. XLI (1904), p. 22.

grown to fifty. The greater part of the increase in the congregation's membership has come through members and their families who moved to Scottdale from other congregations of the Mennonite faith. Although there had been more than a century of Mennonite history and life in this vicinity before the present congregation was organized, the revived congregation has not been able to recover any appreciable number of those whose ancestors first brought the Mennonite faith into this section.

The moving in of members from other congregations may be said to have begun about the turn of the century. A. D. Martin was called here in 1900 to assist in the ministerial work of the congregation. A number of his relatives followed him and located here for a time. Beginning in 1905 a gradually growing influx of members came to Scottdale, many to be employed by the publishing firm, later known as the Mennonite Publishing House. Others moved here to engage in business or occupations in the community. Most of these united and worshiped with the Mennonite congregation during the time they were employed here, but later left to locate elsewhere. This condition has caused the membership of the congregation to be rather more fluid than is true in the average congregation of its size. A brief analysis of the membership record shows that in the past forty-eight years the number of persons received by baptism into the congregation was 196, the number received from other congregations by certificate was 161, and those received upon confession of faith numbered 77. The number lost by withdrawal was 100, those who received letters of certification to unite with other congregations numbered 90, and the number removed through death was 65. Through the effort put forth in extension activities and evangelistic meetings a considerable number of persons from the local and near-by communities have at some time or other been received into the fellowship of the congregation. For various reasons the majority of the accessions from this source later on again withdrew from the congregation. The enrollment of members in 1940 was 170.

The financial contributions of the Scottdale Mennonite congregation to religious and benevolent causes have varied from time to time. The variations usually reflected the economic conditions existing at different times. Following Mennonite practice the ministers who served the congregation have received no direct remuneration.

In 1903 the total contributions reported for the year represented an average of about eleven and one-half dollars per member. In 1909 the contributions averaged ten and one-half dollars a member. For 1915 the average amount contributed was about fifteen dollars, in 1920, twenty-two dollars, in 1923 it reached seventy-five dollars. Later the per member contributions dropped down again. In 1931 it was seventeen dollars, and in recent years has risen again to above twenty dollars.

The property of the congregation includes somewhat more than the meetinghouse. In the fall of 1895 Jacob S. Loucks erected a frame dwelling house on the lot just west of the meetinghouse in Scottdale for the use of a minister and his family. Jacob A. Ressler was the first to live in this house after it was built. A. D. Martin later occupied it, and still later D. H. Bender. By his last will and testament Jacob S. Loucks bequeathed this property to the congregation, which still owns it as a parsonage, although no one of the ministers of the congregation has used it for years. The property is a source of income for the congregation. A drilled water well was put down on the northwest corner of the church lot in 1896. The basement under the meetinghouse was excavated and equipped for the use of Sunday-school classes in 1914.

As early as 1931 there began to be some sentiment and agitation for enlarging the meetinghouse, so as to provide more adequate room for the services and activities of the growing congregation. The matter was studied and discussed until in 1938, when the decision was made that a new house of worship be erected. The meetinghouse built in 1893 was taken down on March 6, 1939. The new brick structure, forty-two by seventy-six feet in ground plan, was put up and was ready for use on August 6 of the same year. The cost of this building was approximately $20,000.00 without the furniture. It is equipped with a modern heating and ventilating system. The basement is modernly equipped for the use of the lower Sunday-school classes and departments. There is a balcony in the rear, making the total possible seating capacity about five hundred.

CORRECTIONS AND ADDITIONS

PAGE 9, FOOTNOTE 3:

Amos K. Stauffer, Lancaster, Pa., has very kindly submitted evidence which shows that Abraham Stauffer (1752-1826) was not a son of John Stauffer (1737-1811)

and Veronica Buckwalter (1746-1826). Other data furnished by him point to Christian Stauffer (d. 1768), immigrant of 1744, as probably the father of Abraham Stauffer who came to Fayette county in 1790.

The husband of Barbara Stauffer (1773-1847), oldest daughter of Abraham Stauffer, was Henry Smith (d. 1829) of Tyrone township, Fayette county.

PAGE 11:

John Sherrick on May 3, 1891, bought 142½ acres of land in Tyrone township, a tract lying along the west side of Galley Run, between Morgan and Owensdale. His brother Joseph, the minister, bought on May 2, 1792, 201 acres of land along Jacobs Creek, adjoining Abraham Stauffer's land on the south.

The minister Conrad Rist (1787-1841) was a son of John Rist (1746-1836) of Tyrone township. The John Rist of Bullskin township, of the 1790 census, was another man who died in 1845.

Abraham Newcomer (1770-1838) was not a son of Peter Newcomer (1742-1820). The latter's children, according to his Will, were: John, Jacob, Christian, David, Magdalene, Elizabeth, Catharine, Barbary, Mary. Peter is said to have been born in Germany. The same is said of Abraham Newcomer. Whether they were related is not known.

PAGE 12:

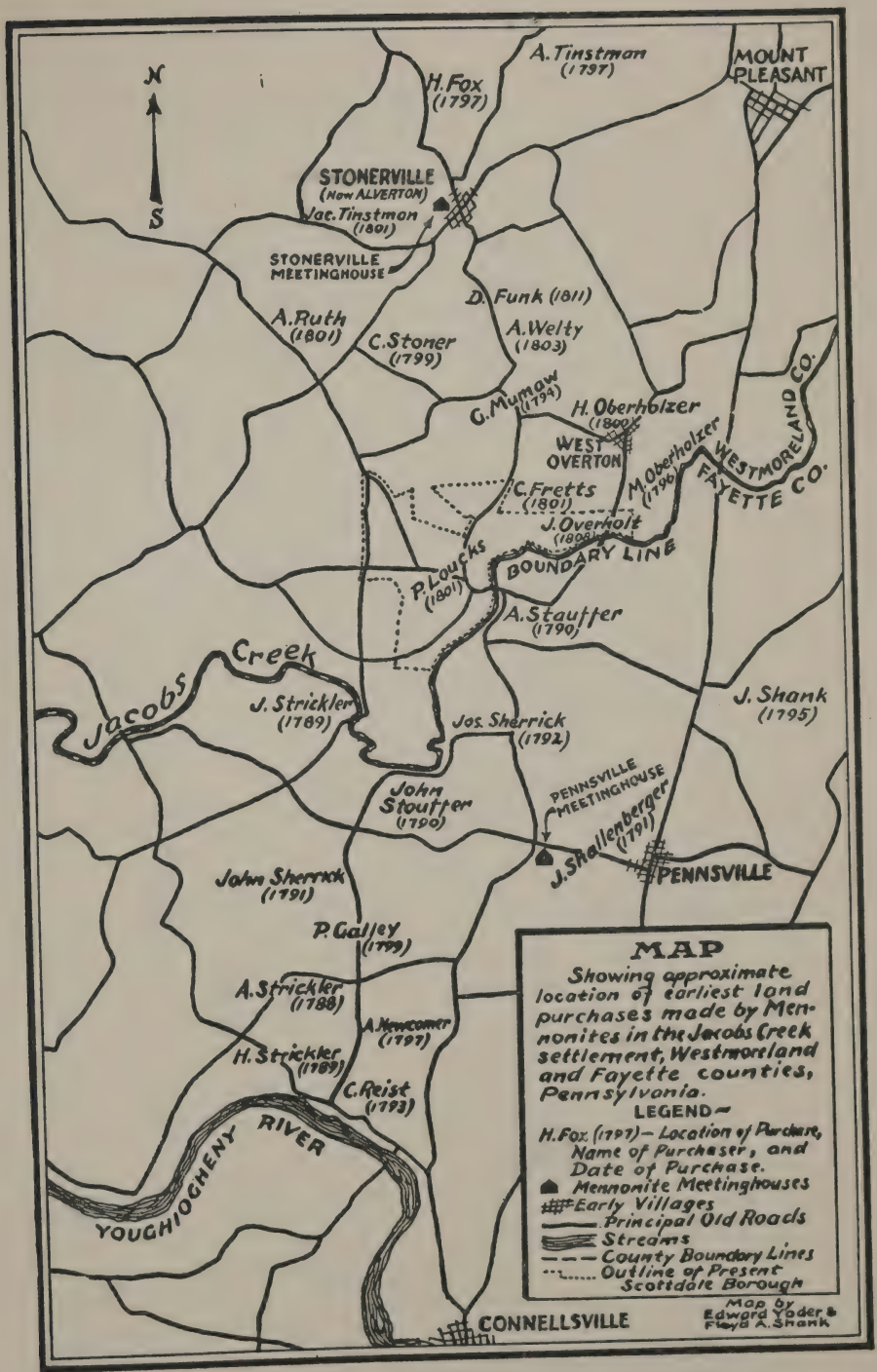
Among descendants of Jacob Eshelman (1786-1838) the tradition exists that he was a Mennonite preacher in Fayette county. This information was furnished by Dr. F. C. Eshelman, Hazleton, Pa.

PAGE 26:

There seems to be some ground for the opinion that the minister John Snyder, who preached in this congregation in the early 1850s was the son of Herman Snyder and Margaret Graybill of Juniata county, Pa. He lived in Elkhart county, Indiana, from 1856 to 1869, in Missouri from 1869 to 1872, and died in Jewell county, Kansas, in 1886.

PAGE 29:

The recent volume edited by Samuel S. Hough, CHRISTIAN NEWCOMER: HIS LIFE, JOURNAL, AND ACHIEVEMENTS (1941), shows that this active evangelist stopped regularly in Westmoreland county on his annual preaching journeys to the West from about 1810 to 1829.


N
S
A. Tinstman (1797)
MOUNT PLEASANT
H. Fox (1797)
STONERVILLE (Now ALVERTON)
Jac. Tinstman (1801)
STONERVILLE MEETINGHOUSE
D. Funk (1811)
A. Ruth (1801)
C. Stoner (1799)
A. Welty (1803)
G. Mumaw (1794)
H. Oberholzer (1800)
WEST OVERTON
M. Oberholzer (1796)
WESTMORELAND CO.
FAYETTE CO.
C. Fretts (1801)
J. Overholt (1808)
BOUNDARY LINE
P. Loucks (1801)
A. Stauffer (1790)
Jacobs Creek
J. Strickler (1789)
Jos. Sherrick (1792)
J. Shank (1795)
John Stoutter (1790)
PENNSVILLE MEETINGHOUSE
J. Shallenberger (1791)
PENNSVILLE
John Sherrick (1791)
P. Galley (1799)
A. Strickler (1788)
A. Newcomer (1797)
H. Strickler (1789)
C. Reist (1793)
YOUGHIOGHENY RIVER
CONNELLSVILLE
MAP
Showing approximate location of earliest land purchases made by Mennonites in the Jacobs Creek settlement, Westmoreland and Fayette counties, Pennsylvania.
LEGEND –
H. Fox (1797) – Location of Purchase, Name of Purchaser, and Date of Purchase.
Mennonite Meetinghouses
Early Villages
Principal Old Roads
Streams
County Boundary Lines
Outline of Present Scottdale Borough
Map by Edward Yoder & Floyd A. Shank

List of Officials Who Have Served in the Mennonite Congregation—Bishops, Ministers, and Deacons

*Abraham Stauffer (1752-1826)
Joseph Sherrick (1757-1811)
*David Funk (1765-1833)
Abraham Welty (c. 1764-1831)
†Christian Stauffer (1778-1852)
(Jacob Eshelman, 1786-1838)
Conrad Rist (1787-1841)
Christian Sherrick (1789-1845)
*John D. Overholt (1797-1878)
Martin Loucks (1798-1869)
John Snyder (1807-1886 ?)
*Henry Yother (1810-1900)
Henry B. Moyer (1818-1892)
†Christian Stoner (1811-1892)
Jonas Blauch (1830-1906)
†Joseph R. Loucks (1855-1926)
*Aaron Loucks (1864-)
*Jacob A. Ressler (1867-1936)
A. D. Martin (1878-1913)
John A. Brilhart (1857-1937)
*D. H. Bender (1866-)
*Daniel Kauffman (1865-)
H. F. Reist (1881-)
†C. B. Shoemaker (1890-)
John L. Horst (1889-)
*A. J. Metzler (1902-)

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* Bishop † Deacon

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

1790—Abraham Stauffer, first Mennonite minister of the Jacobs Creek settlement, coming from Lancaster county, Pa., bought land in Tyrone township, Fayette county.

1792—Joseph Sherrick, also a Mennonite preacher from Lancaster county, bought land adjoining Abraham Stauffer's, though he lived in the same township as early as 1790.

— —(Before 1800) The first Mennonite meetinghouse, built of logs, was erected a mile west of the site of Pennsville.

1794—George Mumaw, Mennonite from Lancaster county, bought land in East Huntingdon township, Westmoreland county.

1799—On March 21, first ground was purchased at Stonerville by trustees of the Mennonite congregation. A log meetinghouse was erected there that year or the year following.

1800—David Funk, Mennonite minister from Bucks county, Pa., settled in East Huntingdon township, Westmoreland county. ——— Henry Oberholzer with his numerous family arrived from Bucks county and settled at West Overton, in East Huntingdon township.

1811—Preacher Joseph Sherrick died.

1812—Preacher Abraham Welty moved from here to Tuscarawas county, Ohio.

1826—Bishop Abraham Stauffer died.

1830—John D. Overholt, grandson of the pioneer Henry Oberholzer, was ordained as a minister.

1833—Bishop David Funk died. ——— Preacher John D. Overholt was ordained to the office of bishop. ——— Martin Loucks, another grandson of Henry Oberholzer, was ordained as a minister.

1841—The log building at Stonerville was replaced by a brick meetinghouse. ——— Preacher Conrad Rist died.

1843—Henry B. Moyer was ordained as a preacher; he removed the next year to Bucks county, Pennsylvania.

1845—Preacher Christian Sherrick died. ——— Henry Yother was ordained as a preacher.

1852—The log structure near Pennsville was replaced by a brick meetinghouse. ——— Deacon Christian Stauffer died. ——— John Snyder was a preacher in the congregation at this time.

1857—Henry Yother was ordained as a bishop in the congregation.

1865—Bishop Henry Yother moved to Illinois. ——— Preacher Jonas Blauch from Somerset county, Pa., moved here to assist in the congregation.

1869—Preacher Martin Loucks died.

1873—The town of Scottdale was started by grandsons of the pioneer Peter Loucks, on land he bought in 1800.

1875—A preliminary meeting was held at the Stonerville meetinghouse for organizing a district Mennonite church conference in western Pennsylvania.

1878—Preacher Jonas Blauch moved to Johnstown, Pa. ——— Bishop John D. Overholt died. ——— The burying ground at Stonerville was leased by the Mennonite trustees to a cemetery association for 999 years.

1879—Bishops John N. Durr of Masontown, Pa., and Herman Snyder of Blair county, Pa., had the ministerial oversight of the Mennonite congregation at this place for thirteen years.

1881—Sixth annual meeting of Southwestern Pennsylvania Mennonite Church Conference was held at Stonerville meetinghouse.

1886—Eleventh annual meeting of the same was held at Stonerville.

1891—Sixteenth annual meeting of the same was held at Stonerville.

1892—Deacon Christian Stoner died. ——— Joseph Loucks, grandson of Preacher Martin Loucks, was ordained as a deacon in May; his brother Aaron Loucks was ordained as a minister in September; both ordinations by Bishop J. N. Durr.

1893—The first Mennonite meetinghouse in Scottdale was erected. ——— The first evangelistic meetings in the congregation were conducted here by John S. Coffman of Elkhart, Indiana, in December.

1894—The Scottdale Mennonite Sunday School was first organized.

1895—Jacob A. Ressler of Lancaster county, Pa., moved to Scottdale; he was ordained as a minister at Stonerville in July.
1896—The annual district church conference was held at Scottdale, also the second annual Sunday School Conference of the Southwestern Pennsylvania district. ——— The first Bible conference in the Mennonite denomination was held for two weeks at Scottdale, Dec. 28-Jan. 9, 1897.
1897—Preacher Aaron Loucks was ordained to the office of bishop.
1898—Mennonite Church of Scottdale was incorporated. ——— Special meetings were held in the Pennsville meetinghouse in April and Sunday school was opened there.
1899—The Stonerville meetinghouse and ground were sold for public school use. ——— Preacher J. A. Ressler left Scottdale as a missionary to India.
1900—Preacher John A. Brilhart moved to Scottdale from Clearfield county, Pa. ——— Bishop Henry Yother, living in Nebraska, died; funeral was held at Scottdale.
1901—A. D. Martin of Franklin county, Pa., was ordained as a minister at Scottdale.
1902—Annual district church and Sunday-school conference was held at Scottdale.
1905—The Gospel Witness Company began publication work at Scottdale.
1906—Mission Sunday school was opened in East Scottdale by members of the Scottdale Mennonite congregation, which still continues, though it was twice closed for short periods of time. ——— Preacher D. H. Bender located at Scottdale as office editor of the *Gospel Witness*.
1908—Annual church and Sunday-school conference was held at Scottdale.
1909—Preacher D. H. Bender moved to Kansas. ——— Bishop Daniel Kauffman of Versailles, Missouri, moved to Scottdale.
1913—Preacher A. D. Martin died at Greencastle, Pa.
1914—Annual district church and Sunday-school conference was held at Scottdale.
1916—H. Frank Reist was ordained as a minister for the congregation.
1919—Preacher Reist moved to Goshen, Indiana.
1921—Annual district church and Sunday-school conference was held at Scottdale.
1922—John F. Bressler conducted the first evangelistic meetings in East Scottdale.
1926—Deacon Joseph Loucks died. ——— Charles B. Shoemaker was ordained to the office of deacon. ——— Its first session of summer Bible school conducted by the Scottdale Mennonite congregation was held in East Scottdale. ——— Annual church and Sunday-school conference was held at Scottdale.
1929—John L. Horst was ordained as a minister.
1932—Annual meeting of the church and Sunday-school conference held at Scottdale.
1934—An extension Sunday school was opened in North Scottdale by the Mennonite congregation on July 1.
1935—Bishop A. J. Metzler moved to Scottdale as general manager of the Mennonite Publishing House.
1936—Bishop Jacob A. Ressler died.
1937—Preacher John A. Brilhart died.
1939—The meetinghouse erected in Scottdale in 1893 was taken down and replaced by a new and larger building on the same site. ——— Annual district church and Sunday-school conference was held at Scottdale.